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Cover: The initial pages of a version of the famous
Tales of the Golden Corpse in the Library at Merigar.

Editorial

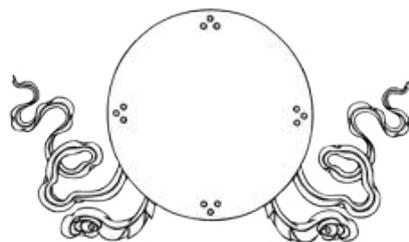
President of the International Gakyil of the Dzogchen Community, Steven Landsberg, gave this inspiring message to the Community at the opening of the AGM on October 30, 2020.



The Dzogchen Community is 45 years old and it is only thanks to Chögyal Namkhai Norbu that this Community was founded and has developed into a huge repository of the Dzogchen Teachings. Without him, none of what we have today as Rinpoche's legacy of Teachings and institutions could have possibly taken root, transformed our lives, and brought about the evolution that Rinpoche always envisioned.

It is now our duty to give something back. It's time to look beyond what the Community can continue to do for us and see what it is that we can do as individuals to maintain the legacy of Rinpoche.

Each one of us has this capacity to realize our unlimited potentiality. We've been given many transmissions and teachings. The only thing left for us to do is to actually apply and recognize our enlightened possibility.



In the last few years there are concrete signs that we are actually doing this. Every time an instructor collaborates with a local gakyil to organize a course and make it happen, either in a live situation or through a zoom or webcast, we're taking a small step in actualizing the Teaching. Every time we sit to do our own individual practice we're taking a small step in preserving the legacy of Rinpoche. Every time we do a Yantra movement or some pranayama we are preserving the legacy of Rinpoche. Every time we take a single step on the Dance mandala, no matter where we may be, we are taking a step towards the fulfillment of Rinpoche's spiritual legacy. Every time we listen to a recording or read a book of Rinpoche's Teaching, our potentiality is manifesting itself. These are a few examples of how we as individuals are and will continue to reveal our enlightened possibility.

The point is that although the International Gakyil has a rather limited mandate, we as individuals in the Dzogchen Community have an infinite mandate. It doesn't mean we can do whatever we want, but it is our duty to do whatever it takes to realize our full potentiality.

In conclusion the International Gakyil doesn't make rules. From time to time we may issue some guidelines or advice to Lings and Gars. The IG basically just follows what has already been established and tries to fulfill the requirements laid out in Italian law: we need to present a budget, we need to approve a budget, call an Annual General Meeting and vote on certain matters. It's not really necessary to ask the IG to answer unanswerable questions. Some of those topics include, amongst many others, transmission and the future of the Community. We are the future of the Community. We are the presence of the Community and we each have our own history in relationship to the Community. We have been doing and will continue to carry out all these activities necessary to fulfill Rinpoche's aspirations, and the International

Gakyil will continue to function to support the legal status of the Community.

As we are the spiritual children of Rinpoche, it is our responsibility to maintain our personal and collective practice, and if we do that, I'm sure that we will continue to mature and in that maturation we will fulfill the aspirations of all enlightened beings and at the same time all of our doubts and questions will be answered and fulfilled.

With that I greet you all.





The Three Doors for Entering Knowledge

An excerpt from Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's teaching in the afternoon of December 30, 2017, during the Atiyoga Retreat at Dzamling Gar, Tenerife, December 28–January 1, 2018.

Transcribed by Anna Rose

Editing by L. Granger with assistance from Adriano Clemente



Photo by Daniyal Ibragimov

Good day for everybody and everywhere. This morning I explained about *thun-mong* and *thun-min*, which is something very important to understand. When we refer to *thun-mong* and *thun-min* in general what we understand in an intellectual way is mind and nature of mind. What is mind? Mind is very easy to understand. Even though we are not thinking about anything in particular after a little while thought arises. This is not only a kind of idea; it is something concrete. Why do thoughts continually arise? The teachings such as Sutra explain that our real nature is emptiness and we can really understand this if we observe. For instance, when thoughts arise, where do they come from, where are they, and where do they go? This is called *chung ne dro sum* (*byung gnas 'gro gsum*). If we observe, we cannot find anything.

When some teachers talk about introducing the mind, they say to observe thoughts as if they were something concrete. And in general we also believe that they are. So where do they come from? When we try to do this practice thought disappears and we cannot find anything. We try to find where thought is, where it goes and what we always find is emptiness. Through this principle we can understand that our nature, our base, is emptiness.

But even though a thought has disappeared, it doesn't mean that now we have no thoughts and we are only in emptiness because immediately another thought appears. Just thinking that we will search where thought comes from and where it goes is another thought. This continual alternation of thought and emptiness is our real condition. When we explain what mind is and how it works we can understand it in this way. So even though thoughts have disappeared, we do not remain only in emptiness.

In Tantrism this continuation is called *gyü*, tantra, which means continuing without interruption. What continues? Thoughts arise, then disappear, and again arise, and this alternation, this continuation is called tantra. In Vajrayana tantra is considered important because it is a kind of introduction to the condition of our mind. So when we search [for our thoughts] for many days without finding anything there is an explanation in the Dzogchen teaching. When we

do not find anything it shows how our real nature is emptiness yet it is important to understand that we are not only being in emptiness.

Some people study Sutra teaching and concentrate a lot on *shunyata*, emptiness. When they have some experience of it they are happy and consider that their practice is working and becoming concrete. But it doesn't correspond to our real condition in which relatively we must understand that there is emptiness and there is also movement. In Sutra teaching when they do practice like *shine*, the calm state, remaining in a one-pointed way in emptiness without thoughts, some practitioners feel happy. Some Sutra practitioners meditate that way for hours and hours. Then because they do not work with movement sometimes they fall asleep and then there are other practitioners who go around and hit them with sticks. Then once again they are in a one-pointed way in emptiness because they are afraid that if they work with visions or the function of the senses, seeing or hearing or feeling something, they may lose their *shunyata*, their one-pointedness on emptiness.

In Dzogchen we cannot learn that way even though we may not immediately receive more advanced teaching about how to work with these things. In the *thun-mong* teaching, which I explained in general way, we can understand that movement and emptiness alternate. That means that we do not just think about it but we discover its real nature.

There is a story about my father. My father and a group of elderly people went to visit a very famous Kagyupa teacher called Trungram Gyaltrul Rinpoche (*drung ram rgyal sprul rin po che*) who was living on a mountain in personal retreat. They went there and asked him for an introduction to the nature of mind. Trungram Gyaltrul Rinpoche agreed to give them teaching and told them how they should practice. He told them to relax and when a thought arises to observe where it is coming from, where it is and where it goes so that they could discover how thoughts are. They did this practice for a day, then on the second day teacher told them to repeat it again and this went on for a few days.



He did not teach them how to chant mantras or do visualization because they had asked for an introduction to mind, to the nature of mind, not learning some practices in an ordinary way. Every day he would ask them what they had found and they would all say that they couldn't find anything. But even though they couldn't find anything it was not sufficient and so they did this practice again and again.

Then one day one of them said that he had discovered something. The teacher said that this was very good and asked him what he had discovered. He said that when he was relaxing and a thought arose sometimes he would see a kind of red flash that would repeat. Then the teacher told him that it was better not to look too much at this red color. To the other people he finally said that the best thing they could find is nothing. That even if they did this practice their whole lives they would not find anything because the nature of the mind is empty. Then he did a kind of introduction so that they could understand the real sense and he advised that person who said that he had found something to do a purification practice such as the Vajrasattva mantra and visualization. This is the story my father told me about when they went to receive teaching.

This is an example of what is called *sem ngo tred* which is very important in the Kagyupa and Nyingmapa traditions. *Sem ngo tred* means introducing the mind and the nature of mind. In Dzogchen it is called direct introduction. Direct introduction means that our real condition is the non-duality of *kadag* and *lhundrub*, which is very similar to what we call mind and nature of mind. *Lhundrub* refers to all the qualities of our senses so that we can see, we can hear, we can have contact with our senses and discover. But its real nature is emptiness, which we cannot see, we cannot hear. For our everyday level of mind it is a complete contradiction and that is why we cannot understand it.

In the introduction to Dzogchen, the non-duality of *kadag* and *lhundrub* is considered to be the state of Dzogchen. But how can we have the idea that existence and non-existence are non-dual? Our mind cannot accept it. But this is to discover that it is beyond mental concepts and concepts of time and space. In the Dzogchen teaching this is called direct introduction. The teacher explains to the students how they can have that kind of experience and through experience they can discover that potentiality.

We have infinite experiences in our lives. Everything is related to experience. For instance, if we eat a little sugar we have a sweet taste. If we eat a lemon we don't have that sweet taste but another one. In the same way when we see, when we hear, there are many things that we like and don't like. All of this is dualistic vision.

Experience is also indispensable when we follow teaching in order to understand the three existences or three gates. What are these three existences? They are body, speech, mind, which, in the teaching, are called *go sum* in Tibetan. What does *go* mean? It means gate or door, so *go sum* are the three doors for entering knowledge, such as the knowledge of wisdom and so on. We need to enter the precious teachings through the one of them if we wish to be free from the prison of samsara. If, for example, we want to visit a museum we have to buy a ticket and go to the door otherwise we cannot get inside. When we have permission to enter then

we go through the door. In the same way the gates are also essential to free oneself from heavy problems and suffering.

The first gate is our physical body. The second is our energy, which is called "voice" or "speech" because in Dzogchen and Anuyoga everything manifests from emptiness through sound and voice. Just like in Yantra Yoga, if we need to coordinate our prana energy, we work with our breathing and for that reason it is also called voice, which corresponds to our energy. The third gate is our mind that judges and thinks.

Direct Introduction

Everything in our life is experience and basically we consider that there are three kinds of experiences related to body and speech and mind. When we receive, for instance, teaching such as Vajrayana initiations, we can observe that they are all related to one of the experiences that introduce us and make us understand. In particular, in Dzogchen teaching the most essential point is that the teacher should give direct introduction to the students. It is more direct than only introducing the nature of mind. How can we have the experience of sensation, experience of clarity, experience of emptiness related to the three gates? We learn from the teacher's instructions and apply what we have learned, not only in an intellectual way, in order to understand and overcome problems, and have specific experiences of direct introduction to the non-dual state of *kadag* and *lhundrub*.

When we work with *thun-mong* in an ordinary way we cannot always do direct introduction. However, there are many different kinds of methods of doing direct introduction and it does not really depend on which method is used but rather and most importantly on the teacher who is giving the introduction. When the teacher totally has this knowledge he can use any kind of method related to experience to give the introduction. Direct introduction does not mean that the teacher reads a text by a famous master and urges the students to read it. Introduction does not work that way. It is only possible to give direct introduction by working concretely.

In an ordinary way we can learn to do Ati Guruyoga. We do a very clear visualization and when it is present in our mind we finally relax without any thoughts of good and bad. In that moment we are beyond time and space. This is a very simple way of doing direct introduction although most people cannot understand that because the teacher does not explain everything like with the inner Tantras. The teacher does not explain because he should respect the transmission.

Direct introduction is not related to a technique or system. The teacher can also create it because he has perfect knowledge and always has a possibility to give introduction. Students should understand this. Then when we are teaching formally it is sufficient simply to do Ati Guruyoga.

This is to make us understand a little mind and the nature of mind. For us the nature of mind is only a concept of the mind because we know that when there is mind then there must also be the nature of mind. In that way we can understand a little more concretely. In the Dzogchen teaching direct introduction is very important even when it is done in a more general way in Ati Guruyoga.



On Collaboration in the Dzogchen Community

Edited excerpts from a Talk by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu April 6th, 1994, Bermagui, Australia

I want to say a few words about our Community. Community means practitioners. Practitioners means people who are living in the same transmission, in the same boat, traveling towards realization in the same way. That means that we must know how to collaborate with each other because if we don't know how to collaborate, or if we are not collaborating well, we can have problems with the transmission and with the guardians. So we try to be aware.

We also have the responsibility of the teaching and the transmission. That is not solely the responsibility of the Teacher. People always think that the transmission and the teaching are taken care of by the Teachers. But what is a Teacher really? I am a practitioner. Now you are a student, but maybe tomorrow you will also be a Teacher. You are also on the path and you have that responsibility. For that reason, we practitioners collaborate with each other and that is called community.

Community means: if a boat is crossing a very big river, and if there was no other means to cross that river, then everybody in that boat forms a kind of community. The community is in the boat to travel beyond the river, so if we create problems on board we are not collaborating and then we can't get safely to the other shore. So, for practitioners it is very important to collaborate. This means also that for Dzogchen Community people who are in different places, it is very important to collaborate with each other. It is not always necessary to be in one place. There are many ways of collaborating.

Centers with a hierarchical system have a number one center, and then lower ranking numbers two, three, four, etc.; and they send each other envoys, formal letters of communication and the like. This system does not really correspond with the principle of the Dzogchen teachings, we do not do it in this way, but we do want to collaborate. So if we are really traveling towards realization and we need this collaboration until total realization, then we must continue and find a solution.

I feel that collaboration is very important because there is no way we can continue the Dzogchen Community, the teachings and the transmission without it. The continuation of the Dzogchen



From the collection of the late Elisa Stutchbury offered by Catherine Horner.

Community does not mean just groups of people in centers who meet together for a few days, and then everyone disappears. That is not the principle. The principle is the transmission. During a retreat I am explaining every day, transmitting mantras, methods, etc. Then what do you do? You practice these methods and you apply them. To use what you have learned, you also need the circumstances and possibilities. You cannot do all practices everywhere. A practice like the "Guruyoga of the White A" you can do at any moment, going to work or in your house.

But for having realization or a concrete benefit in our life, it is not sufficient to do the white "A" occasionally and remain in this presence a few minutes. You need to do more. Though maybe you do not have the opportunity at the moment, perhaps one day you will. If you have the possibility one day, what will you do? Where will you go? In which way will you practice and develop your knowledge and your understanding?

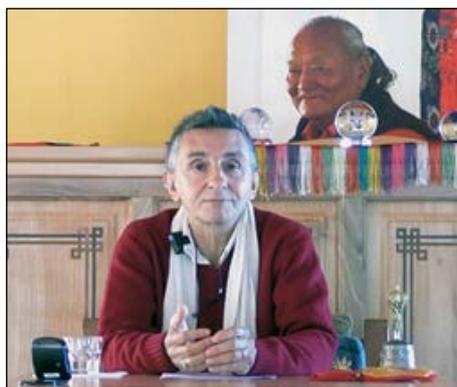
For this we need the right circumstances. That's why I am trying to create different Dzogchen Community Gars. Gar means a main place for meetings and for applying practices.

In any case, I think it is important that people who are really interested in the teaching have a small piece of land. When there is land, we can have a Gar. We can also do things like Santi Maha Sangha training in the Gar. Then the Community becomes something more alive and concrete. I think that is important for everybody who is interested in the teaching. Of course, if someone listens a bit to the teaching, and then goes back home and lives only in a personal way with no wish for a continuing contact, such a person has too little commitment for a project of this kind. However, it is important for Community people to work in the direction of collaboration. ❀

The Principle of Transmission

An explanation given in webcast before the practice on the Anniversary of Adzom Drukpa, November 10, 2020

Adriano Clemente



Good day to everyone everywhere. Today we are going to do the practice of Guruyoga for the anniversary of Adzom Drukpa, but before that, I will explain a little about the principle of transmission and how we do this practice.

Rinpoche started to give this transmission of Guruyoga around 2000 in order to give the opportunity to people who did not have the possibility to meet him personally. Many of you may remember that at the beginning there was only a video recording and Rinpoche would do the practice at the same time and the transmission took place that way. Then, after a few years, when the Internet connection started, it happened more in real time and Rinpoche would do this transmission in three different periods of the year.

When we say “transmission” we need to understand what the real principle is. It is not like a school teacher or a music teacher who transmits knowledge to their students. The real sense of transmission refers to that state which is beyond dualism and all concepts of samsara. Once this has been experienced and integrated in oneself then the teacher can transmit that knowledge. That is why in the Dzogchen Teachings we follow the three testaments of Garab Dorje from the beginning.

The first of these statements is direct introduction, which means the teacher tries to transfer his state of knowledge to the state of the student through various methods. How can this come about? There are two aspects that are very important: the first is called *chinlap* in Tibetan while the second is the student’s devotion. If one of these is lacking the transmission cannot take place.

The Tibetan word *chinlap* can be translated as “blessing” or at times “empowering flow” although these words cannot truly express its real meaning. *Chin* means a power that is linked to a state beyond dualism, *lap* is a verb meaning one transfers or

gives this *chin*, or power, so that it changes or transforms the condition of the student.

Where does this *chinlap* originate? It is the natural outflow of our primordial state. First of all we must recognize or have knowledge of our primordial state. Secondly we must stabilize that state, and the third step is to develop it, which means complete integration with it.

At the beginning of a session all practitioners always do Guruyoga because Guruyoga in particular is the practice for receiving this *chinlap*. When we become familiar with this state of knowledge, our own *chinlap* develops naturally and once this happens we can give transmission to other students and help them to enter the real transmission.

It is very important to understand this point because at the moment there is a great deal of discussion and confusion about who can give transmission, who is authorized and who is not authorized to give it. So if we understand transmission to be some kind of method or instruction such as visualization, we might think that we can do it. However it will not work if we have not developed that *chinlap*, that power, within ourselves. *Chinlap* is not a kind of magical power with which realized beings are able to free all beings. It doesn’t work like that. This is why the second aspect is the devotion of the student.

Devotion relates very much to our individual capacity and condition and also to our karmic history. For instance, there might be a very important lama who everyone considers to be a great lama, a holy being, but when we visit him we don’t feel any connection. This lama may have some *chinlap* but our devotion is lacking, there is no connection and we cannot receive that blessing. Then the other way around, we may have devotion for someone who is not a real teacher and try to connect with them but in the end it doesn’t really help.

We have all had some experience of what *chinlap* means, such as going to a holy place, like a sacred mountain. There are many holy places. But what does a “holy place” mean? It is a place that has the capacity of *chinlap*. Sometimes we have devotion and may want to go to a place such as Mt. Kailash because we know that it is a sacred place. If we have that intention, that devotion, then we can receive that blessing. But if we don’t have devotion or participation and go there like a tourist, we will not receive anything like that. This is an important point.

You may recall a famous saying by Pha Tampa Sangye, an important mahasiddha, who when one of his students asked, “Please give me your *chinlap*”, replied, “Why are you asking for this? Instead give me some devotion.” It’s not that the Mahasiddha needed the student’s devotion for his own benefit, but to communicate to him the real way to receive *chinlap*.

So even though Rinpoche is not here, he has left this world, and some people say that we are now a sangha without a driving force, we still have the possibility to contact this *chinlap*. Even though Rinpoche is not alive, the places where he has been, the energy when we practice together, this is his *chinlap* that is still continuing. When we go to a sacred place or meet a master, what effect does it have? Immediately our mind is calmer. We may have many doubts and problems and worries in our daily lives, but when we are in the presence of a holy master in that moment they almost completely disappear. With this *chinlap*, this spiritual power, nothing is lacking, and we find complete fullness of our being.

I remember many years ago, during the first years of Merigar, when Rinpoche was still teaching at the university in Naples, whenever he had time he would come to Merigar, once a month or once every two months. There was a practitioner who was mainly in charge of the Merigar Letter at the beginning. One afternoon we were at the Yellow House and Rinpoche was upstairs. I don’t remember very well but I think we were having a picnic and this practitioner said, “When Rinpoche is here it is almost like one single heart that is opening, that is expanding. When Rinpoche is away slowly, slowly we become closed again.” I mention this just to explain the effect of being in the presence of a holy being.

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Now we are still alive and need to develop our capacity so the practice of Guruyoga is extremely important for receiving and developing this *chinlap*. The Nyingmapa practice refers to the three roots: the root of the *chinlap* is the Guru. The root of the siddhis is the yidam, because if we wish to achieve some particular kind of realization then we need to do yidam practice, transformation, and so on, related to the four actions in the mandala, and that is relative. Then the root of spiritual activity is the dakinis, because they always protect the teaching at the Nirmanakaya level. When a teacher gives transmission the dakinis always help for the success of the teacher's activities. This is the meaning. You may remember how Rinpoche always followed his dreams and advice from the dakinis such as whether he should give a teaching or not, where to teach, and so on. When a teacher is at that level he has contact with dakinis.

When we consider the practice of Dzogchen what should we do in general? We should continue in the state of instant presence that we have recognized by means of this transmission or direct introduction. However, there is not only one way to receive direct introduction. Many people think that direct introduction is *rigpai tselwang*, that they are one and the same, but they are not. *Rigpai tselwang* is one way to give direct introduction. If you read Longchenpa's explanations in the Dzogchen Upadesha series there are sometimes four ways, eight ways, different ways to give transmission. We should not create limits and consider that there is only one way.

The most important thing is that through direct introduction we have had recognition of that state. Then once we have this recognition, we need to be certain about it, without having doubts. What does it mean to have doubts? It means that our minds are very conditioned by concepts, ideas and habits and are always grasping at objects. That is how the mind functions, so even if we are in this instant presence, which is a state beyond concepts and dualism, immediately after thoughts can arise, such as, "Oh, that was instant presence", or "No, it was not instant presence". So we may not be certain about it. This is dealt with in the second statement of Garab Dorje: not remaining in doubt. We have knowledge of our state and it is one. We clearly recognize that single state without doubts.

The third testament of Garab Dorje means that now we have complete confidence in our capacity of liberation. This means we are at a level where our thoughts and emotions automatically self-liberate and do not leave a trace in our consciousness.

So this is, in general, an introduction to what the principle of transmission means. Transmission means that the teacher who has this knowledge, this capacity, tries to transfer his knowledge to the student's consciousness by means of this empowering blessing called *chinlap*.

Even though we are not dealing with direct transmission or transmission, if we do any Guruyoga practice on our own, when we visualize a form in front of us, we are always asking to receive this *chinlap*. For example, in the invocation of Garab Dorje we say *randrol chenpoi chinphop la*, "Please transmit your *chinlap* to me so I can find myself in the state of self-liberation. I need that *chinlap* because without that power it is difficult for me." I am asking for help. When we do the Chöd invocation to Machig Lapdrön, we say *karmo omgyi chingyi lob*, meaning, "Give me your blessing or empower me through the white Om" and so on. Also with Guru Padmasambhava, *chingyi lapchir shegsu sol*, "Please come and give me your *chinlap*". *Chinlap* means we really feel this devotion within even if we are doing the practice on our own. Devotion is like a secondary cause for receiving *chinlap* through our visualization and our intention. So in general when we do a practice of Guruyoga we should apply it in that way.

And particularly on a day like today, one of these three anniversaries during the year, we need to work very much with that aspect. The original practice that Rinpoche wrote in Tibetan is called *tusum chinbep* meaning the transference of *chinlap* in three periods of time. It means that this *chinlap* is very important. In the text he explains *gongyud chinlap*. *Gong* means the enlightened state of the teacher, and *gyud* means the mindstream or consciousness, so *gongyud* refers to the state of contemplation, the state that is the essence of Guruyoga. Through the *gongyud* the teacher transfers that and we receive it.

What does it mean that we receive it? It means that we experience it in our condition and in that moment we have a kind of awakening. The state that is awakened within us is the state of the Guru and in that moment our state and the Guru's state are inseparable. That means the unifica-

tion of the state of the Guru and our state is the essence of Guruyoga practice and so every time we do Ati Guruyoga we should be in that state.

Of course, sometimes it is not easy. We may ask ourselves why we are not succeeding, or if we need more *chinlap*. If we need more *chinlap* it means we need more devotion on our part. Then it is good to do more visualization of the Guru, asking very deeply from the heart to receive that blessing of knowledge. In that way it works better and more easily.

I think this is important for all practitioners in general and also for new practitioners. There may be somebody who has never met Rinpoche, but somehow they have a strong connection with him, strong devotion and a strong interest in his teaching. Perhaps, they have had some dreams. I have heard of people having dreams of him even though they haven't met him. It is important in the Dzogchen Community that we try and integrate these people. Especially on occasions like this, they can join, and through the Guru's blessing which is always present, we Dzogchen practitioners all do practice together, and these new people may have some benefit.

We cannot limit this because it can also be a way in which they somehow awaken, also by reading Rinpoche's teachings and so on. There can be many ways in which Nirmanakayas can benefit beings so we should also not limit that. Rinpoche was a great source of blessing and teaching and transmission, still is and always will be, so it is important that we try not to limit ourselves in this sense.

However, at the same time each one of us, especially the instructors, should observe their condition and check their capacity, knowledge, whether it is stable, and how it is integrated in daily life. This is easy to observe by oneself. If we sincerely try to do that and work according to that principle, gradually our capacity will surely develop and then Rinpoche's wish to spread the Atiyoga teachings will be fulfilled. This is my wish and this is also how I feel we should go ahead. ©

Elio Guarisco

The editors of *The Mirror*

With thanks to Paolo Roberti di Sarsina's biography of Elio Guarisco and his Teachers.

On Friday November 27, 2020, around 2pm Italian time, our dear friend and Vajra brother Elio Guarisco passed away in Como, Italy. He had been in intensive care in hospital for Covid 19.

Elio's deep background in Buddhist studies started in India in 1974 when he began studying Buddhism with Satya Narayan Goenka, the leading exponent of the meditative Vipassana tradition and student of Sayagyi U Ba Khin. Returning from India he deepened his practice of Vipassana Meditation with Western teachers of the School



Photo by Alexander Gavrilov

Rabten, philosophical adviser to the Dalai Lama.

At that time Elio was one of the co-founders of the Tibetan Buddhist Centers 'Ghe Pel Ling' (which had Geshe Tamdrin Rabten among the founders) and later 'Terra delle Dakini' in Milan.

Upon the invitation of H.E. Kyabje Kalu Rinpoche, one of the most eminent meditation masters of the Karma Kagyu and Shangpa Kagyu School, and one of the first Tibetan masters to teach in the West, Elio moved to Darjeeling, India where he remained for more than twenty years working on the translation of the great encyclopedia of Indo-Tibetan knowledge, known as *Sheja Kunkyab*, written by Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye (an exceptional and eclectic scholar, protagonist of the non-sectarian movement in Eastern Tibet at the end of the 19th century, of whom H.H. the XVI Karmapa recognized H.E. Kyabje Kalu Rinpoche as the Emanation of Action)

In this project Elio was the main translator of the following volumes: *Myriad Worlds* (1995), *Buddhist Ethics* (1997), *Systems of Buddhist Tantra* (2005), *The Elements of Tantric Practice* (2008) published by the American publishing house Snow Lion, now Shambala Publications.

In 1986 Elio joined the Dzogchen Community founded by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, eminent and eclectic scholar and one of the greatest Masters of Dzogchen, who had been a close collaborator of Giuseppe Tucci at the Institute for the Middle and Far East in Rome (IsMeO) since 1960 and was professor of Tibetan and Mongolian language and literature at the 'Orientale' University of Naples.

During the twenty years he spent in India, Elio continued to actively collaborate with the International Dzogchen Com-

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Satya Narayan Goenka and his students at a Vipassana retreat in 1974. Elio Guarisco is fifth from right in the top row.

of Sayagyi U Ba Khin, among whom John Earl Coleman, Robert Harry Hover and Ruth Denison, and became an authorized Vipassana instructor. In 1976 he organized the first retreat in Italy with J. E. Coleman in Pavia.

Afterwards he entered Tharpa Choeling Monastery in Switzerland founded in 1977 by Kyabje Geshe Tamdrin Rinpoche (later called Rabten Choeling – Center for Higher Tibetan Studies in his honor) where for ten years, from 1976 to 1986, he learned the spoken and classical Tibetan language and deepened his knowledge of Buddhist philosophy and meditation by studying with a dozen authoritative Tibetan masters, in particular with Geshe Tamdrin



First Vipassana retreat with John E. Coleman in Italy, Torrazzetta (Pavia), November 1976. Elio Guarisco is the third from the left in the front row, next to John E. Coleman



Kyabje Geshe Tamdrin Rabten Rinpoche with the monks of the Tharpa Choeling 1978. Elio Guarisco is second from the right.



Elio Guarisco with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and H.E. Kyabje Kalu Rinpoche.

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munity and, in particular, with the Shang Shung Institute for the Preservation of Tibetan Culture, of which he was one of the founders.

From 2003, Elio Guarisco was one of the main translators of the Ka-Ter project launched by the Shang Shung Institute, Austria for the translation of ancient texts of the Dzogchen Teaching. He was also one of the first teachers in the training for translators from the Tibetan language promoted annually by the Shang Shung Institute, now the Atiyoga Foundation.

Fluent in colloquial and classical Tibetan, Elio was one of the world's most important translators of classical Tibetan texts, working on numerous translations from Tibetan for Shang Shung Editions, including many works by Chögyal Namkhai

Norbu dealing with traditional Tibetan Medicine and other topics:

Birth, Life and Death, Shang Shung Editions;

The Tibetan Book of the Dead, Awakening Upon Dying, Shang Shung Editions, 2013; *Healing with Fire, A Practical Manual of Tibetan Moxibustion*, Shang Shung Editions; *The Practice of Tibetan Kunye Massage*, Shang Shung Editions; *Healing with Touch, the Complete Book of Tibetan Massage*, Shang Shung Editions; *The Silver Mirror, Tibetan Medicine Applied in an Easy Way*, Shang Shung Editions; *Longchenpa's Advice from the Heart with Oral Commentary* by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, Shang Shung Editions; *The Longsal Divination of Dorje Yudrönma*, Shang Shung Editions, 2013;

Message from Tibet Through Songs and Dances compiled and edited by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, Shang Shung Editions; *Changchog Ritual of Purification for the Deceased*, Shang Shung Editions; *The Vajra Armor, Teaching on the healing mantra of Dorje Kotrab*, Shang Shung Editions.

Other translations or original texts include:

The Marvelous Primordial State, The Mejung Tantra, Shang Shung Editions; *Togden Shakya Shri. The Life and Liberation of a Tibetan Yogin*, Shang Shung Editions; *Gyalwa Yangönpa. Secret Map of the Body*, Shang Shung Editions; *Le gioiose vicende di Kunga Legpa*, Shang Shung Editions, 1990; *La Vita e L'Insegnamento di un Maestro Tibetano*, Edizioni Ghe Pel Ling, 1981; *Le Vite degli 84 Mahasiddha*, Edizioni Ghe Pel Ling, 1980; *The Foundations of Tibetan Medicine*, Edizioni Ghe Pel Ling; *Elements for the Study of Tibetan Medicine* written by Dr. Thubten Phuntsog, the base text used for the study of Tibetan Medicine by the Istituto Shang Shung in Italy; *Healing with Yantra Yoga: From Tibetan Medicine to the Subtle Body*, written together with Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo, Shang Shung Publications; *Risvegliarsi al momento della morte (Il libro tibetano dei morti)*, Shang Shung Publications; *Creative Vision and Inner Reality*, Shang Shung Publications; *Discovering the Health Benefits of Yantra Yoga*, Shang Shung Publications; *Tibetan Medicine and Tsa, Lung and Thigle*, Shang Shung Publications; *Curarsi con lo Yantra Yoga: Dalla Medicina Tibetana al Corpo Sottile*, written together with Dr. Phuntsog Wangmo, Shang Shung Publications; *Yang dGon pa and His Text on the Vajra Body in Sharro, Festschrift for Chögyal Namkhai Norbu*, Garuda Verlag; *Prefazione a Un lampo di vacuità. Il Sutra del Cuore della Sagghezza*.

In addition Elio wrote an interesting autobiographical book about his life experiences with Tibetan Masters entitled *Quando il Garuda Volò a Occidente. L'esperienza di un discepolo buddhista con un lama tibetano* published by Shang Shung Editions.

On November 6, Elio sent this poem to his Russian translator and friend, Elena Razumova, to put on his Facebook page since he couldn't do it from the hospital. Elena kindly sent it to The Mirror for publication.

Presence is the Master

Presence is the healer

Presence is life

Presence is the best friend

Presence is non-attachment

Presence is non-confusion

Presence is clarity

Presence is wisdom

Presence is liberation

Presence is the enlightened mind

But never let it be unmarried to compassion

Otherwise it is



Elio Guarisco with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.

For many years Elio also worked as a translator for eminent Tibetan doctors and spiritual masters, including His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama.

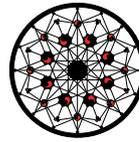
For his work as a translator for many Tibetan masters and organizer of congresses, events, seminars and meditation courses, Elio greatly contributed to the introduction of Buddhism in the West and particularly in Italy.

He was appointed by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu as an advanced meditation instructor and, in this capacity, travelled to various countries around the world teaching and holding courses.

Elio Guarisco was also professor of Tibetan Medicine in “Health Systems, Traditional and Non-Conventional Medicine” at the University of Milan-Bicocca.

In addition to his vast knowledge of Tibetan culture, Elio was a devout pilgrim who was well acquainted with and had visited and guided others to sacred Buddhist power places in Tibet, Nepal and India throughout his life. The many members of the Dzogchen Community throughout the world and all those who knew him will recall the clarity and detail of his explanations of the Teaching, the great hospitality and generosity that he extended to all people, his indefatigable work ethic and total commitment to the Teaching, as well as his readiness to help others. He will be greatly missed but we will meet again. ©

The photo of Satya Narayan Goenka and students courtesy of the Vipassana Research Institute, India. The photo of Kyabje Geshe Tamdrin Rabten Rinpoche with the monks of the Tharpa Choeling courtesy of Edition Rabten, Switzerland.



Annual General Meeting of the International Dzogchen Community 2020

October 30, 2020. Onsite – online

After opening the meeting with a moment of Guruyoga, the President of the International Gakyil, Steven Landsberg, gave a brief but sincere message calling on those present to do their best to preserve the legacy of the Community's Founder, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, and realize their full potentiality. His opening speech can be read on page 3 of this issue of *The Mirror*.

Question and Answer Session

Steve's message was followed by an important question and answer session. Prior to the meeting, members from the whole IDC had been invited to send in their questions online so that they could be answered during the meeting by the International Gakyil (IG). There were around 80 questions and since many of them were similar, the IG categorized them according to the different colors of the Gakyil (blue, red, yellow). The IG worked to reply to the questions and shared their answers with the whole Community online before the meeting. Although there was not time to answer all the questions during the meeting, each section of the Gakyil chose five questions to answer. A few questions that came in just before the meeting were discussed at the end.

Blue Gakyil Replies

Blue Gakyil member Fabio Risolo initiated the Q&A session and explained that the IG had received many questions about transmission but would reply to the main ones. The first question was about the meetings with Yeshi Namkhai in August, the second regarded Direct Transmission and whether the Master's son would give it. Another query asked about the possibility of Yeshi Namkhai's involvement with the Dzogchen Community and there were also many questions about who could give transmission at the moment and in the future and

whether the International Gakyil would be able to give guidance for the future. In this regard, Fabio said that the IG had no mandate for this although they did have the mandate to safeguard the Transmission. He went on to say that the instructions of the Master, particularly expressed in a letter he wrote in 2016 and shared several times throughout the Dzogchen Community, should be respected. Other questions asked about the role of the Santi Maha Sangha instructors and the future of the training. The answers to these questions and the others (Red and Yellow) that follow are available on <https://webcast.dzogchen.net/index.php?id=agm-documents>

Red Gakyil Replies

Anton Rutkovskiy of the Red Gakyil spoke about some of the questions from members that fell in the sphere of the Red Gakyil. One important question was related to the Archive and access to recordings of retreats given by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. Shang Shung Foundation is in the process of indexing and categorizing the terabytes of information it contains, in collaboration with the Namkhai family. The Foundation will pass the Archive to Merigar West and they will be responsible for organizing the contents and making them available to members with new software in 2021.

In addition this year in collaboration with various Gakyils the IG has started to facilitate webcasting the recordings of some retreats with Rinpoche, which are now available on [dzogchen.net](https://webcast.dzogchen.net/index.php?id=rinpochers-retreat-teachings) in separate sections <https://webcast.dzogchen.net/index.php?id=rinpochers-retreat-teachings>.

The IG plans to continue with this activity and asks all Gakyils who have good quality recordings of retreats with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu at their Gar to share their material with the IG Red Gakyil red@dzogchen.net.

Some people had asked for access to the materials related to the meeting so the IG has created a separate page on the webcast website where users can check the presentation or refer to the questions and answers presented.

Another important question was about communication in the Community and creating an environment for healthy communication with practitioners around the world. In reply, Anton said that everyone can take responsibility for their own communication, starting with the local community and if there is a necessity, people are free to organize meetings with others through Norbunet and other means of communication. The International Gakyil is always open to communication and on request can organize meetings with practitioners from Lings and Gars and other entities within the Community. However, it is not logistically possible for them to create an online meeting for thousands of people in the Community.

Yellow Gakyil Replies

Marek Reisz (Assistant Yellow IG) answered some of the questions relating to the role of the IG, the statute, and membership. The first question was about the future of the IDC and what kind of activities the IG will be involved in after the three year period of mourning. In reply Marek explained that the IG is in the process of discussing close cooperation with the Atiyoga Foundation.

Marek explained that the IG strategy for the 3rd year of mourning does not change much. They are still dealing with present circumstances and continuing to provide legal, managerial, technical and advisory support for Gakyils and DC members all over the world.

Then there were questions about the modification of the statute that would permit the IG to operate while the seat of the Honorary President, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, is vacant. The process for modifying the IDC statute has still not gone ahead for several reasons, including complex legal ones related to changes in Italian legislation for Non-Profit legal entities and the Covid_19 situation, however, there are plans to make these modifications early in the coming year.

Other questions included one about the possibility of new members joining the Dzogchen Community. The reply was that everyone with the intention to receive a Direct Introduction in the future can become a Welcome Card holder for three con-

secutive years and then a full member the following year. There are also many open courses for new members.

There was a question about the policy of the Lings having to contribute 45 percent of their membership income to their associated Gar, a system that was established in the Blue Book. Marek answered by saying that in the future if there are serious reasons for this policy it may be discussed. At the moment the Gars should work with their Lings to understand local situations.

On a similar note, some people had questioned membership policy and reduction of membership fees in these difficult financial times. In reply, the IG has already considered suggesting to all Gars to reduce membership fees according to their situations with possible reductions for older people and those on minimum wages. All details to these questions can be found on <https://webcast.dzogchen.net/index.php?id=agm-documents>

The meeting continued with Anton outlining the Agenda for the meeting after which he presented an overview of the International Dzogchen Community.

IDC Overview

The Organizational Structure diagram shows the different roles in the IDC and whether they are actually covered or not.

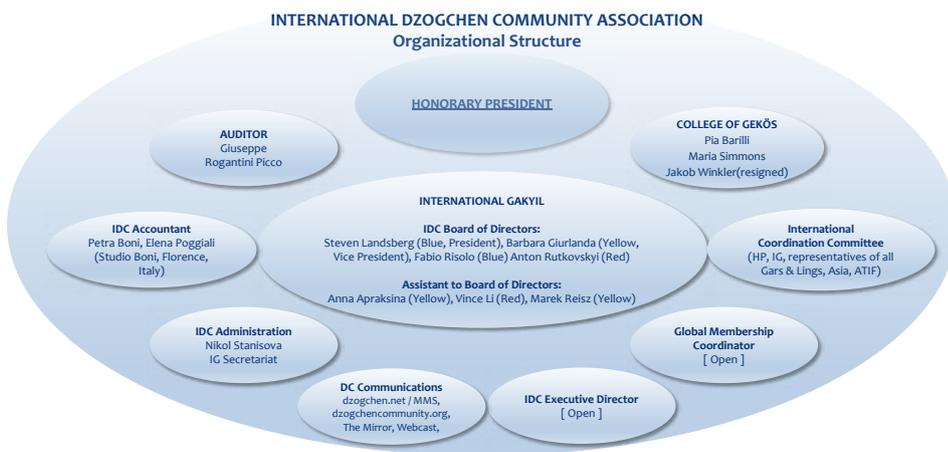
As the position of Honorary President is currently vacant and the three assistants to the Board of Directors need his confirmation to become formal members they legally remain Assistants although they function like normal team members.

IDC Mission and IG Activities

The responsibilities and daily commitments of the International Gakyil haven't changed much. Their mission is described in article 3 of the statute: to "support the transmission of the Dzogchen Teaching, as handed over within Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's lineage and to safeguard its authenticity".

The IG is in charge of operational processes for the IDC by aligning Gars and Lings with the IDC, provides global services to the Community, collaborates with Gars on administrative issues, manages legal and financial issues for the IDC, manages the IDC/ASIA house at Dzamling Gar, and supports the development and activities of ATIF.

This year Kunsangar North was affiliated with the IDC. It was a long process and the IG would like to sincerely thank many people for their work over several years.



- ### How IDC and International Gakyil (IG) operate
1. IDC has the official seat in Merigar, Arcidosso, Italy and a second (unofficial) seat in Dzamling Gar, Adeje, Spain.
 2. The IDC follows Italian laws / regulations and accounting system. The IDC operates via Italian bank accounts, PayPal and cash box located in Italy.
 3. The IG meets in virtual office once per week via Zoom for 2 hours meeting. Each meeting is recorded in MOM.
 4. There is one time per year the meetings of the Assembly General of IDC and of the International Coordination Committee in Dzamling Gar.
 5. All IG members works on voluntary basis for period of 3 years. IG members could be elected for two consecutive terms.
 6. The IDC has 3 employees (International teachers), the rest of collaborators work based on subcontract or volunteer basis.
 7. The IDC is one of shareholder of Meriling SL (with 31,11%) and Comunidas de Bienes of Dzamling Gar (with 18,082%).
 8. IDC and ID have a website <http://dzogchencommunity.org/> to share main documents and news with members.

Membership Trends

Barbara Giurlanda of the Yellow Gakyil presented the membership trends in the International Dzogchen Community from 2015 up to October 24, 2020. These trends were illustrated in several slides showing the IDC membership count by year from 2015 up to the present, the membership Count by Gar, the Membership Value by Gar, and Membership Type by Gar.

Barbara went on to say that in the Dzogchen Community there are two types of membership. Local ordinary and local sustaining fees are set by the local Gar because each Gar has different circumstances while global sustaining and global meritorious membership is set by the IG.

One of the slides showed the percentage of stable members in the IDC (almost 70%

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IDC Alignment

A Gar / Ling is affiliated to IDC when its Statute is based on the same mission and fundamental principles and operating rules of the IDC Statute and internal regulation. This is to provide a common framework for:

- the organizational structure of Gar / Ling and relationship among them
- the membership system
- the use of the Logo and the Trademark

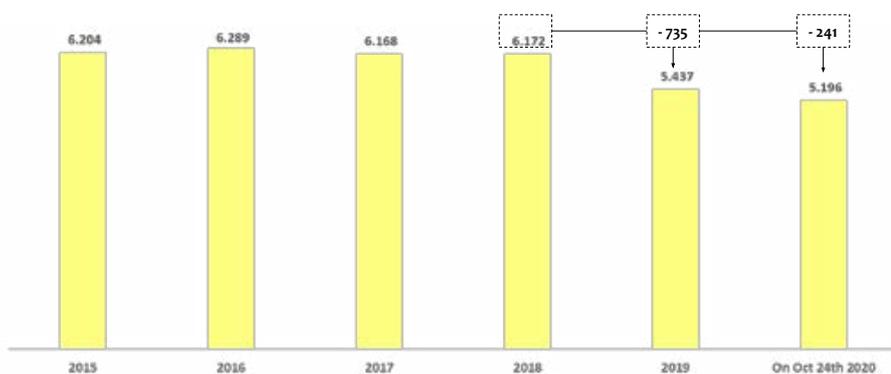
NAME	COUNTRY	STATUS
Dzamling Gar	Spain	Affiliated
Kunsangar North	Russia	Affiliated
Kunsangar South	Crimea	Exception
Merigar West	Italy	Affiliated
Merigar East	Romania	Affiliated
Namgyalgar	Australia	Affiliated
Samtengar	China	Exception
Tashigar Sur	Argentina	Affiliated
Tashigar Norte	Venezuela	Exception
Tsegyalgar East	USA	Affiliated
Tsegyalgar West	Mexico	Affiliated
Munselling	Japan	Affiliated

▪ “Affiliated” = all the Gars or Lings which have the possibility to legally align (directly or indirectly) to IDC

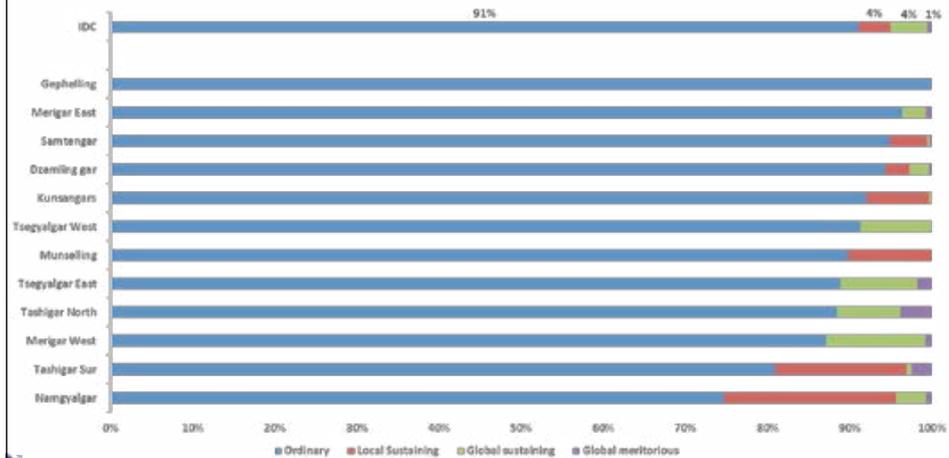
▪ “Exceptions” = Gars which have special circumstances that do not permit legal alignment at this time. However, all 3 Gars have registered their Members on IDC MMS

In 2020 Kunsangar North was affiliated with the International Dzogchen Community

IDC Membership Count by Year



Membership Type by Gar (on October 24th 2020)



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of the total amount). They are voting members because to be eligible to vote a member must pay their membership for three years in sequence, acquiring voting rights in the fourth payment year.

2019 Annual Report

Barbara presented the official 2019 financial statement, which was voted on and passed later during the meeting. All the financial documents were prepared according to the requisites of Italian legislation and were very technical. The documents and their details can be accessed

on <https://webcast.dzogchen.net/index.php?id=agm-documents>

There were several slides for the annual report. The financial statement slide showed the assets, equity and liabilities of the IDC. The IDC Financial Statement at a glance slide showed the financial situation from 2012. Another slide outlined how the IDC has received its income and covered its operating expenses from 2012 to 2019. For example, in 2019, the income of the IDC was greater than what had been set in the budget. In 2019 the IDC received income from Membership Fees, Webcast and Mirror donations, donations for the International Teachers fund, Dzamling Gar, and Shedra. Operating expenses included some paid collaboration, legal and admin fees, bank fees and taxes, management of the Webcast and Mirror, and the 4 International Teachers salaries.

Another slide illustrated some of the projects that the IDC was involved in during the financial year including Dzamling Gar Development, ATIF, Tashigar North fundraising and others.

One of the most important projects undertaken in 2019 was the completion of the evolution of Meriling SL's ownership structure and real estate property. This was made possible through an initial operation to increase the share capital of Meriling SL (which took place in August 2018 without the financial involvement of the IDC) and the following reduction (in March 2019) of the same share capital with simultaneous proportional assignment to each of Meriling's shareholders of the real-estate property as “undivided”. As a result of this project's completion, since 31.12.2019 IDC has been a shareholder of Meriling SL for 31.11% and owns 18.082% as one of the Co-Owners of DZG real-estate property. Other shareholders/Co-Owners are Dzamling Gar, Merigar West and East, and Tsegyalgar East.

Finally and concerning the yearly result 2019, Barbara explained the proposal to cover the loss of €11,075 in the 2019 IDC Financial Statement through the utilization of the Equity available line.

IDC/ASIA house at Dzamling Gar

Anna Apraksina presented a detailed report on the financial situation of the IDC/ASIA house at the Global Gar, outlined in a slide. She mentioned that a good part of the expenses involve covering general expenses at Dzamling Gar such as the swimming pool, gardens, etc.

The Shedra Project

Anton explained that this project met some technical problems and has been put on hold. However, the IDC will be able to use much of the information stored on it about courses as well as a database of instructors and their certification. The funds remaining from this project may be used for other IT activities.

Proposed 2020 IDC Budget

Anton outlined the many activities of the IG in 2020, such as continuing the legal alignment of IDC Gars and Lings, work on the IDC statutes to bring them into line with new Italian legislation, setting up a new website for the International Atiyoga Foundation, IDC membership, copyright, legal and financial admin, communications and support for the International Teachers.

Barbara gave details about the 2020 revised financial statement outlining operating expenses and income (January-September) with the first budget (drafted by the IG in December 2019) and the revised budget for the last quarter of the year (drafted by the IG for taking into account the unexpected effects of the Covid-19). She went on to discuss income, operating expenses, Projects Destination, and the 2020 expected loss of € 7,000 (the proposal is to cover the loss through the utilization of the Equity available line). More details can be seen in the power point presentation.

Continuation of term of office

Steven Landsberg, President, and Fabio Risolo, member of the Board of Directors of the International Gakyil, were both at the end of their three year term of office. They both offered to undertake a second three year term which was voted on and approved at the end of the meeting.

Renewal of the Auditor

The position of auditor of the IDC is a legal obligation. Further details of the legal points can be seen in the presentation. The current auditor is Giuseppe Roganini Picco who was ending his first three year term and is available for a second term. Information about the auditor is available in the presentation. Renewal of this position was voted on and approved at the end of the meeting.

Renewal of the members of the College of Gekös (College of Guarantors)

This is part of our organizational structure and a legal requirement.

The College of Gekös has jurisdiction over possible controversies between Association members and administration bodies. The current College consists of Pia Barilli, Maria Simmons and Jakob Winkler who are finishing their three year term. Pia and Maria are continuing while Jakob is retiring. Will Shea is available to take his place for the next three year term. The renewal was voted on and approved at the end of the meeting. For information about the members see the presentation.

The voting for approval of the balance and financial statement for 2019, approval of the IDC 2020 budget, approval of the continuation of term of office for two IG members, approval of the renewal of the IDC Auditor, and the approval of the IDC members of the College of Gekös was carried out online at the end of the meeting by means of a new online system through the Gars and Lings. There were 17 Gars and Lings active in the voting.

Final part of the meeting

The International Gakyil replied to a few questions from IDC members and added that in general the IG are always open for communication with members who have questions or proposals. One of the questions concerned the current financial situation and membership. Barbara replied explaining that even though there has been a slight decrease in membership, the 2020 financial situation is quite stable and permits the IG to give assistance to areas of the Community where there may be difficulties.

Barbara encouraged people to continue in renewing their membership to show in a concrete way their interest, participation, and support for the Dzogchen Community.

Before closing the meeting Anton reminded those present that the audio, video, and presentation slides and documents of the meeting would be available for members on [dzogchen.net](https://webcast.dzogchen.net/index.php?id=agm-documents). The presentation includes all financial statements in detail although members should understand that these are internal documents of the Community and should not be shared outside the Community.

<https://webcast.dzogchen.net/index.php?id=agm-documents>

This exceptional meeting closed with the IG President thanking the organizers of the meeting, the translators, and the technical team for their dedicated hard work, and participants for their presence. Then there was the dedication of merit. ©

International Dzogchen Community

2021 Global Membership Policy Announcement December 2020

Dear IDC Members, Gakyils & Membership Coordinators,
First of all the International Gakyil (IG) would like to thank you for your collaboration in this not easy year. Despite the problems in the world the IDC keeps united and we go on together reaching more or less the same membership base as in the last year.

Currently we have 5343 members (as of 3rd Dec. 2020) that is only 99 members less compared to last year.

Renewing membership is very meaningful, and it is a concrete gesture of showing interest, participation and supporting the International Dzogchen Community's projects.

With reference to the Membership Policy, the IG would like to keep going on for the coming year 2021 with more or less the same conditions as before with minor adaptations to the actual economic conditions.

Due to the present world situation some members with not so strong personal economy but with the intention to maintain their membership despite these difficulties, asked the IG to consider their situation in the membership policy.

Therefore we propose that Gakyils apply – on a voluntary basis – the following membership adaptations according to local circumstances:

1. "Elderly Membership": 75+ old members with uninterrupted membership at least in the 6 last years can ask local Gakyils to apply for a symbolic membership of 12 EUR/14 USD per year. We strongly recommend applying this policy especially in case of relevant financial issues. This membership would be considered as a Local Ordinary Membership.

2. "Sponsored Membership": Members with relevant financial issues or serious health problems can ask local Gakyils for financially supporting their membership fee directly, through a local fund if established, or by looking for one or more donors (inside the local Community or by asking the

IG for a global research). This membership would be considered as a Local Ordinary Membership.

Let's unite our strength and energy and continue the best as we can in our collaboration.

The International Gakyil wishes all members the very best for 2021 and we look forward to continuing to support you in any way we can.

Please find below the Global Membership Policy for 2021.

The IDC allocation of 15% will remain unchanged for 2021.

Global Membership Policy 2021 – Type and Fee

Local Ordinary Membership Fee	[fee set by local Gakyil]
Local Sustaining Membership Fee	optional type with fee set by local Gakyil
Local Elderly Membership Fee	optional type set by local Gakyil, 12 EUR/14 USD fee
Local Sponsored Membership Fee	optional type with the same Local Ordinary Fee set by local Gakyil

Global Sustaining Membership Fee	500.00 EUR / 575.00 USD fee set by IG
Global Meritorious Membership Fee	1,500.00 EUR / 1,725.00 USD fee set by IG

Global Membership Policy 2021 details

Benefits: Global Meritorious
80% discounts on all events and workshops in all Gars and Lings
Each Gar can provide more benefits to its own members

Global Sustaining
50% discounts on all events and workshops in all Gars and Lings
Each Gar can provide more benefits to its own members

Currency: EUR is applicable currency for: MGW&E, DZG, KGN&S, SG, NG, Munselling, Gephelling
USD is applicable currency for: TGE&W, TGN&S

Subsidies: decisions to subsidize regular Local Ordinary Fees should be met by the establishment of a special fund or of a fundraising policy at the Gar/Ling level. If needed the Yellow IG could announce a global research for "donors" available to support membership needs

Please let us know if there are any questions or something we can assist with.

All the best,
Yellow Gakyil Team
International Dzogchen Community
yellow@dzogchen.net ©

Thoughts & Reflections from Some SMS Instructors

Compiled by Julia Lawless with the kind help of Gabriella Schneider, Stoffelina Verdonk, Elias Capriles & Lukas Chmelik

On request of The Mirror, some SMS instructors would like to share with you some thoughts and reflections regarding newcomers and existing members of the Community, after the passing of our beloved Master.

Firstly, regarding newcomers to the Community, it has been a difficult time for everyone, including the International Gakyil, to offer a clear way forward for those new to the Community, especially to those who have not yet received transmission from the Master. Still, Rinpoche gave specific advice on this topic in a talk entitled 'On Working with Newcomers' which was published by Shang Shung Edizioni in 1994. In this article, Rinpoche covers many points that still apply today in our present situation:

"When those who have been following the teachings for a number of years practice together collectively and new people who haven't received transmission participate, many of the old practitioners often get worried. I have received letters from several different places on this topic. When something like this happens, how should the practitioners who have been following for a longer period of time behave? What should they do? There are two ways of responding to this situation because there are two different types of new people involved.

Firstly, there are those who are seriously interested in the teaching but who may not yet have had the possibility of receiving transmission from the Master. In the case of this type of person, it is not particularly important that they haven't yet received transmission, because their participation and interest are deep. A person with a profound interest of this kind, even though they haven't received transmission today, will receive it tomorrow. They will always find a possibility of meeting the Master and receiving the transmission. Those who seek will find! So one should certainly not reject this type of person who wants to participate and is genuinely interested, and whenever it is possible, when one practices together with them, one should help them

to participate in such a way that they can learn something, giving them whatever advice may be necessary so that they can understand what is happening.

Then there's another type of person who is not sincerely interested in following the teaching, in doing practice, or in having realization through this path. Rather what this type of person has is a kind of curiosity, perhaps just wanting to find out what is going on, and what this teaching consists of. If we conclude that a person only has this kind of curiosity, we are justified in asking that person not to participate." The full article regarding these points can be found in The Mirror, Issue 22.

Then regarding the existing membership of the International Dzogchen Community, the figures in 2020 show that the great majority of the members have remained firmly committed to the values that Rinpoche transmitted as being inherent to the Dzogchen Community. What are these values?

Firstly, there is the value of 'Sangha' – our closely knit Dzogchen Community – and the support it provides to individuals in their practice as well as via social interaction. We may still be in the middle of a global Covid pandemic, and it is true that the ability to meet other practitioners face to face has been greatly diminished, yet the variety of online media platforms such as webcasts, skype, zoom and various apps (such as the Sangha App) have more than compensated for any lack of more traditional tools for communication and support. As a result of the national lockdowns, a shift has taken place from local, onsite events to international online events, which have the ability to attract a much wider audience. Nor is there the need for speakers or instructors to fly around the world since they are able to fulfil their commitments from their own homes. This is good for allowing wider audiences to participate in a greater range of otherwise maybe inaccessible activities and it is also good for the environment and for saving time and reducing travel costs. Being aware of the value of Sangha, manifests in these constant and continuous online activities that have taken place intensively since the beginning of this year: activities that are offered with devotion by different instructors, either with the great support of the webcast team, or by zoom. This is the virtual internet-Mandala of our community that gives us a feeling of togetherness, even if we experience difficult times and

are far from each other. However, life online does not compensate for the warmth of human contact and let's hope that face-to-face encounters will gradually return in the next few months. Supporting each other through good times and bad ... this is the value of Sangha.

Another value transmitted by Rinpoche is the principle of self-responsibility and self-reliance. Rinpoche's advice lives on in our hearts, yet now we each need to find our own ground and gaze at our own face in the mirror and to embody his transmission. With self-responsibility and self-reliance as a key, we need to dedicate ourselves to practice, integrating the knowledge of the primordial state into our daily life, being present and doing our best to integrate this knowledge. Being aware that the Master is within us, there is no need to look outside for the Master: his blessing is always with us, and ultimately it is futile to search outside for realization. We have already received the essence of all teachings and we've also received so many other practices for different circumstances, now is the time to rely on our own potentiality. The large participation in virtual-meetings shows that this really is happening. Knowing that fundamentally everything is impermanent and subject to change, we can feel empowered by our good fortune in that we share in the commonality of our experience and knowledge of the Dzogchen teachings as transmitted by our Teacher. In this sense, at least we are all in the same boat together, to use Rinpoche's words, until we all reach the other shore: total realisation.

'Working with circumstance' is another piece of precious advice that Rinpoche gave to us all. This means not getting stuck in one type of mode or approach. We are witnessing and living through such a time of transmutation as the Dzogchen tradition finds itself in new cultural circumstances. Path-finding in times of change can be daunting as what lies ahead is not yet clear ... but this also represents an opportunity to let go of future expectations and all personal conditioning from the past and to be open to what the present moment is offering. Perhaps at present, we can say that we are in living through a period of change, a time of creative chaos, the Dzogchen Community too is in a state of flux ... but nothing ever remains the same in life although we might wish to hold onto a false sense of security ... and such a time

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Paolo Roberti di Sarsina Welcomed as Director of the New ATIF Research and Documentation Department

Marco Baseggio

On Monday 23 November, the ATIF board appointed our Vajra Brother Paolo Roberti di Sarsina as director of the new ATIF Department "Research and Documentation".

Paolo, founder and president of the Foundation for Salutogenesis ONLUS "<http://salutogenesi.org/>", has been a member of the Dzogchen Community for many years, as well as a psychiatrist, university lecturer and researcher, and expert in



traditional, complementary and unconventional medicine.

He carries out numerous institutional activities, in particular for the development of projects supported in Europe.

The main functions of the new ATIF department

- search for possible participation of Atiyoga Foundation in Horizon Europe (the new European funded framework research program starting in 2021) consortia and calls and in other institutions funded calls

and projects, considering the workforce and curriculum of the legal entity.

- paving the way for bridging with Italian university field for tentative proposals to establish courses, masters courses, post-graduation courses, etc., in collaboration with Atiyoga Foundation concerning Tibetan Medicine and Culture, and Preserving Its Traditional Intellectual Property.

- to set-up, implement, overview and handle a repository of scientific articles and documentations stored within Atiyoga Foundation website to be regularly increased, and to be accessed by researchers and students. Paolo has donated to the Atiyoga Foundation his archive of hundreds of scientific articles concerning Tibetan Medicine, as the first concrete step.

- to promote and develop for those interested within the Community of a mind-set towards research and European and international institutions. ©

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can also be rich with potentiality. What always remains the same in the midst of confusion and change is the strength of the transmission and the immutability of our inherent instant presence: our nature of mind. Working with circumstances means to be aware of this all-pervading state, to be beyond hope and fear, and to live in the equanimity of bodhichitta.

The 'principle of generosity' is another value that characterises the way by which Rinpoche helped to guide and orientate the direction of the international Dzogchen Community. Rinpoche embodied this principle entirely in his own person: he worked tirelessly for the benefit of others throughout his life, often at the expense of his own wellbeing. By always showing kindness to others, even if at times this was through wrathful means, and so he provided a perfect example for us to follow. Equanimity, loving kindness, compassion and joy were constantly apparent in his presence, words and behaviour. Now we need to find all these qualities within ourselves and to embody the spirit of generosity by helping to support the membership so the life of the Sangha can continue. It is also natural that such great kindness elicits a sense of im-

mense gratitude and a sense of responsibility in those individuals who were blessed by His Being: that is, to fulfil his vision in a pure way and continue to maintain the Dzogchen Community as the vehicle for the future transmission of the Dzogchen teachings, which was the very essence of his life's work. In Rinpoche's own words:

"All teachings that are related to a precise transmission have their origin. This origin comes from one who has given this teaching and who became totally realized through it, after which this method is handed down and transmitted. Thus if we seriously follow a method such as this, we know that a teaching has its principle, its lineage and its transmission without interruption. This is what real teaching means. It is something really serious. When we speak of a teaching that we follow sincerely and seriously, it is this type of teaching, not just any path or type of his philosophy that someone has invented.

Certainly one can have fun, experimenting with anything in life. But if we are going to dedicate our lives, our precious time, to a teaching, it's much better to understand well what the origins of that teaching are, what its value is, and in what way can one have realization through it, and so on... The

basis of the teaching is transmission and if one understands this well, one protects the transmission, maintains the transmission, and those who are interested in receiving the transmission can prepare to do so. So one can work in this way..." (Ibid) ©



The Archive, the Library and Shang Shung Publications

Three precious assets of the Dzogchen Community to manage and enhance

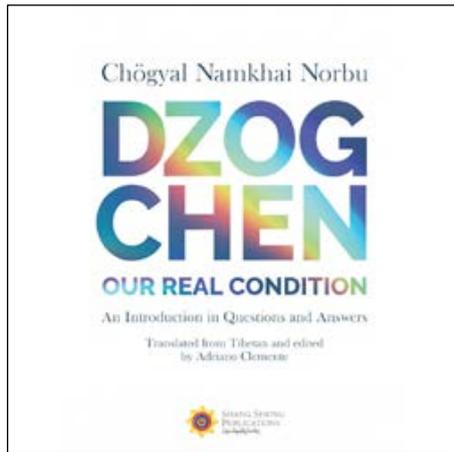
In recent months, many people have asked us for information about three important assets of the Dzogchen Community: the Archive, the Library and the publishing house. We are happy to update all those who are interested on what has been done and of the guidelines established in 2019–2020, a fairly complex period both for the passing of our Master and for the effects of the Covid pandemic.

The Archive of the Dzogchen Community: a huge collection of important and precious documents and data, mainly digital (87 TB), to be reorganized and enhanced

In 2019 we set up a small working group (with Mirella D., Carla G., Giorgio D., Gianni T.) to clarify the composition of the contents of the Archive and make a general plan for its reorganization. In particular, with the few resources available in 2019, in about six months the most important thing was done: identifying and separating all the precious teachings of the Master.

Subsequently there were meetings with the heirs of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu who very kindly gave us some suggestions and, above all, important and necessary information and authorization on how to make the Archive usable and managed in the future.

In the coming weeks, the Archive will be handed over to Merigar, which, in the meantime, has already prepared a plan to carry out important reorganization and management interventions in 2021. Obviously we hope that all of us in the Community will support Merigar in this important and delicate task that the Gar has agreed to carry on. In fact, the Archive, as requested by many, will also have to be strengthened



from the hardware point of view. The Archive will therefore be available for use as soon as possible for those who request it. In particular, the Archive of the teachings transmitted by Master Namkhai Norbu is going to be organized for use, study, and research and not for profit.

Pending the implementation of the reorganization plan, the Archive up to now has been made available for Gars, Lings and those practitioners who have requested it for particular reasons, thanks to the use of small resources from SSF/SSP. In recent months and until January 2021, this has been made possible also thanks to financial support received from the International Dzogchen Community (IDC).

The Library: an important collection of rare texts, one of a kind

The management of the library of the Dzogchen Community was entrusted to Merigar as early as the end of 2018. Thanks to initiatives wisely planned by Merigar in that area and to the dedication of the librarian, the Library is now visited every year by hundreds of people from outside the Community.

Both of these documentary heritages (with the exception of the teachings of the Master) are part of the Archive declared of particular historical interest by the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage.

The Archive and Library together consist of: 64 manuscripts, 2,361 Tibetan dpecha, 2,220 audio and 4,000 video recordings on physical support, 5,411 b/w and color negatives, 1072 color slides, 8,223 color and b/w prints, 1,107 photos on several formats, 153 postcards, 82 drawings, 289 b/w gelatin silver prints, 408 contact sheets and a Serv-



er memory containing 40,740 image files, 13,361 audio files and 4,804 video files.

The Superintendency of Tuscany has already been informed that these assets will pass from Shang Shung Foundation to Merigar West by the end of this year.

Shang Shung Publications (SSP): the Dzogchen Community publishing house that wants to make the Master's texts known even outside the Community

The Shang Shung publishing house was founded in 1983 at the request of the Master.

Its original aims were similar to those it pursues today: translation, compilation and publication of texts related to the teachings of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu with topics ranging from Dzogchen to Buddhism, Yantra Yoga, spiritual and traditional dances, Tibetan culture and traditional medicine, in the form of translations, commentaries, practice texts, teaching transcriptions, as well as study materials in audio and video format. The publications are enriched with books and multimedia products on similar subjects also by other authors.

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu was the first master that transmitted the Dzogchen teaching in the West in its original form comprising Semde, Longde and Upadesha, gaining a first-hand experience and knowledge of adapting it to the Western world during more than 40 years of activity. For this reason his pure Dzogchen teaching should be preserved precisely through accurate translations and transcriptions that reflect his real unique knowledge and realization. From 1983 until today the Shang Shung publishing house has developed the capacity to produce faithful translations

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of the writings of our Master, including his Longsal Cycle, and original Dzogchen texts, thanks above all to the tireless work of Adriano Clemente and Elio Guarisco, strongly supported by the Ka-Ter project managed by Oliver Leick, but also thanks to the activity of the many transcribers, editors, graphic designers, layout people, staff, managers and collaborators who, in the course of time, have offered their work, very often for free.

Of course this great achievement has been possible only through the permanent encouragement of Rinpoche and the generous support of the readers who have bought our products and offered precious donations. A publishing house that is based mainly on restricted products for practitioners cannot survive only on sales. The huge work backing our books can be guaranteed only through the active participation and collaboration of all Dzogchen Community members.

Shang Shung Publications is an essential asset and heritage of the Dzogchen Community that is carrying out an indispensable service for all those who are seriously interested in the teaching transmitted by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. Today we have the important task to make his wisdom more known to the general public by increasing open publications through modern media such as ebooks, audio/video tutorials, social networks presentations and so on.

We are very grateful to all readers who are aware of the demanding purpose of our activity and sustain it with their trust and appreciation.

Visit our catalog with all products in English: https://sse-db.shangshunginstitute.org/media/pdf/books_en.pdf

Please donate if you believe that our activity is worth supporting at <http://www.shangshungpublications.org/donate>

In the last period (2019–2020) Shang Shung activities have been reorganized. In 2019 particular attention was paid to cost control and creating more effective internal organization. In fact, until January 2020, sales were quite good and costs were sustainable. Unfortunately, following the spread of Covid, things have changed. In particular, the reduced possibility for people to move and participate in retreats and courses has enormously influenced substantial direct sales that used to normally take place during these events.



However, we are moving forward with the reorganization plan and the publishing house, as expected, will remain in the non-profit sector, but will also take on some aspects of commercial enterprises, so as to be able to operate more effectively on the market. This type of enterprise is called a limited liability non-profit social enterprise. This is possible because we carry out a social task. We are preparing an action plan for 2021 that will be presented in January 2021.

In any case, we can confirm that we will continue to guarantee as always our commitment in the translation, publication and distribution of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's important texts restricted to members of the Dzogchen Community but, at the same time, we will try to launch projects for an appropriate divulgation of non-restricted Dzogchen and open texts to the public outside the Community.

In particular, we are trying to develop a working scheme on social networks in order to be able to correctly give information about the heritage of the existing texts of Namkhai Norbu, Dzogchen Master and Professor.

We hope this will be possible in collaboration with all the departments of the Atiyoga Foundation so as to put into operation all the existing but still unexpressed synergies between the editorial function of Shang Shung and all the multiple disciplines and activities of the Dzogchen Community: Yantra Yoga, Dance, Khaita, Medicine, Astrology, Art, Teachings, Archive, Museum, Asia.

Information about Shang Shung Foundation

We also want to inform you that in these days we have arranged for the dissolution of the Shang Shung Foundation. This has been possible thanks to the fact that in recent years most of the functions and coordination of the multiple activities of the Community have now been positively assumed by the Atiyoga Foundation (ATIF), the umbrella strongly desired by our Master for the Dzogchen Community. In addition, the passage of the Archive and Library to Merigar has been implemented and finally, in these days, the publishing house has been established in the form of a non-profit social enterprise.

For more information please write to: info@shangshungpublications.com

The Shang Shung Publications Team ©

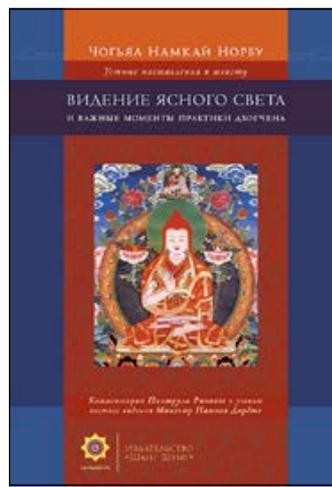


Update from Shang Shung Publications Russia

Shang Shung Publications Russia continues to publish books of our teacher Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, books for a wider audience, and many Dzogchen Community practice booklets in the Russian language. Our mission is to make all published teachings of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu available to Russian speaking readers worldwide.

In August we published a wonderful book, *Vision of Clear Light and the Crucial Points of Dzogchen Practice*, which includes profound instructions on the Great Perfection transmitted by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu during a retreat dedicated to the teaching by Paltrul Rinpoche. The root text by Paltrul Rinpoche is based on essential indications received by the great Dzogchen master Mingyur Namkhai Dorje in a pure vision in which his root guru, Jigmed Gyalvai Nyugu, bestowed on him his spiritual testament in a few words, explaining the crucial moments of the Dzogchen practice and transmitting the essential instructions on Upadesha Tregcho practice. Paltrul Rinpoche, who himself was a disciple of Jigmed Gyalvai Nyugu, wrote down this teaching in Mingyur Namkhai Dorje's words and added his own commentary. In his inspirational instructions addressed to modern Dzogchen practitioners, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu goes into the most important moments of these precious teachings by Jigmed Gyalvai Nyugu, Mingyur Namkhai Dorje and Paltrul Rinpoche. The Tibetan title is: *rdzogs pa chen po'i nyams len gyi gnad mthar thug pa'i rtsa 'grel 'od gsal gyi snang cha zhes bya ba bzhugs so*.

You can purchase this book both in hard and soft copy in the SSP Russia webstore:



<https://shangshungstore.ru/catalog/knigi-dlya-chlenov-do/sozertsanie/videnie-yasnogo-sveta-detail.html>

The original publication in English: <https://shop.shangshungfoundation.com/it/riservato/289-the-vision-of-clear-light-2370000132659.html>

Besides this, not long ago we published the first edition of the new series called Longsal Commentaries, *The Crucial Preliminaries of the Path of Ati*, which contains the unique instructions on the practice of the outer, inner and secret Rushens of Dzogchen Upadesha, as well as the seven main Semdzins from the Longsal Cycle, or *The Luminous Clarity of the Universe, Heart Essence of the Dakinis*. In particular, it contains a practice of purification of the Six Lokas based on the principle of the "reversal" (*ru log*) of samsara, combined with the Vajrasattva purification. The detailed commentary on this extraordinary upadesha is followed by an abridged version of this practice, known as *the Preliminaries of the Path of Ati (A ti lam gyi sngon 'gro)*.

The book was published in a limited edition and is dedicated only to practitioners of the Dzogchen Community who received transmission of these teachings or root initiation of Longsal Jnanadakini from Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. We plan to continue the Longsal Commentary series with two other volumes.

More details: <https://shangshungstore.ru/catalog/knigi-dlya-chlenov-do/sozertsanie/predvaritelnye-praktiki-ati-detail.html>.

The original publication in English: <https://shop.shangshungfoundation.com/en/restricted/784-the-crucial-preliminaries-of-the-path-of-ati-200000002507.html>



We express our heartfelt gratitude to our *jindag* friends (sponsors) whose support makes it possible to publish these books!

We continue working on new books in the Russian language. In our immediate plans – the biographies of the great masters Nyagla Pema Dudul and Togden Shakya Shri, 3rd and 10th volumes of the Longsal Teachings, the root Semde tantra *Total Space of Vajrasattva* and many others.

The publication of books and the publishing house activity is not possible without your help. You can support our work making an offering on our website:

<https://shangshungstore.ru/aboutus/podderzhat-izdatelskie-proekty.html>

If you are abroad and want to make a donation, please use Paypal <https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/ssedruss> or contact us!

With love, Kirill Shilov,
Shang Shung Publications Russia
Our Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/ssedruss>

Webstore: <https://shangshungstore.ru/> ©



News from the Russian School of Tibetan Medicine

Despite the fact that this year we, like most people, encountered circumstances of a new, mostly distanced life, classes at the School of Tibetan Medicine continued and the transition of the courses to online format has been quite successful!

On 15 November the second module of the "Diet According to Tibetan Medicine" program was smoothly completed. The course lasted one and a half months and was completely conducted online. It consisted of video classes, online meetings, homework and tests. 20 students participated and completed the course, and now they will have to take the final module of the Diet program, which, hopefully, will be onsite.

We would like to express our gratitude to our Master, professor Phuntsog Wangmo and her wonderful assistants Irina and Medegma, and all students for their hard work and patience in studying the characteristics and qualities of different food and drinks!

Nutrition in Tibetan medicine and the course we offer

The Tibetan view of nutrition is based on the understanding of the interrelatedness of our body and the outer world. Thanks to understanding the principles of how our body functions and the basics of nutrition it is easier for us to live harmoniously and eat without harming ourselves, under all conditions and in every season.

The knowledge of Tibetan medicine on nutrition and diet is very precise and fundamental. According to its complex approach, maintaining the natural balance of our body is the primal cause of health. That's why the prevention of diseases is very important in Tibetan medicine, and nutrition is a very effective tool.

Our program may be interesting for those who are taking their first steps in studying Tibetan medicine and wish to develop in that direction, people who are in-

terested in the integral approach to health and prevention of diseases, specialists in wellness and a healthy life who would like to become familiar with new methods, people who are curious about a healthy and harmonious diet for themselves and their family, chefs and those who love to cook and perfect their skills, as well as those who are open to new knowledge and would like to learn more about themselves. The program consists of 3 modules, the first and the second ones last 30 hours and the third 40 hours.

Module 1:

- Embryology in Tibetan medicine: conception and development of the foetus
- 5 elements in inner and outer worlds, their characteristics, interrelatedness and interdependence
- 3 humors, their qualities and characteristics; concept of balance
- 7 body constituents
- Causes and conditions of illnesses; gates of entering and ways of spreading illnesses
- 6 tastes, their characteristics and qualities
- Tastes, qualities of the food, spices, drinks, poisonous combinations
- 7 body constitutions
- Diet recommendations for different types of body constitution

Module 2:

During this module we study the main types of food and drink, their nature,

characteristics and their medicinal application.

Module 3:

- Spices: their properties and use in food
- Compatible and incompatible products
- Cooked food
- Practice of preparing various healing Tibetan dishes

Upon successful completion of the entire program, graduates receive a Diploma in Diet according to Tibetan Medicine from the International School of Tibetan Medicine of the Shang Shung Institute and the Atiyoga Foundation.

In the near future we will announce the next enrolment in the Diet According to Tibetan Medicine program, consisting of 3 modules. Stay tuned for the School's news!

School of Tibetan Medicine Russia:

<http://tibetanmedicineschool.ru/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/stmrussia>

Learn about the courses and programs from other departments of the School of Tibetan Medicine:

USA Branch:

<https://tibetanmedicineschool.org/>

Branch in Spain: <https://tenerife.tibetanmedicineschool.org/>

Subscribe to the Shang Shung Institute mailing list to keep up to date with interesting events: <https://clck.ru/S2MGz>

With love,

Shang Shung Institute School of Tibetan Medicine, Russian branch

<http://tibetanmedicineschool.ru/>



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Seeds of the Future for Refugees from Haku, Nepal

Seeds of the future. This is the name we wanted to give to our new campaign in support of refugees from Haku, Nepal, with this aim: to give these people the possibility of a future and help them get their lives going after the interruption of the last five years.

Perhaps not everyone knows that Nepal is among the poorest and least developed countries in the world, with a Human Development Index of 0.579 (2018), which puts it in 147th place out of 188.

The earthquake of 25 April 2015 inflicted devastating blows on the population of Nepal and the COVID-19 emergency has greatly aggravated the already difficult health and socio-economic situation of the country. Eight million people are at risk of poverty and malnutrition.

The internally displaced people of Haku are among the most disadvantaged sections of the population. Their village, in Langtang Park, was razed to the ground by the earthquake and since then they have

lived in temporary shelters in conditions of extreme poverty and precariousness. The children suffer from chronic malnutrition, their parents work occasionally and sometimes the monsoons sweep away their small shelters, highly at risk also due to frequent landslides.

Due to the pandemic, the situation has become even more dramatic. All works have been suspended and all forms of livelihood have been canceled.

ASIA, which had already intervened in support of the displaced people of Haku after the earthquake, accepted the request for help from this starving community after repeated lockdowns in the country, and in October distributed food supplies for a month to 680 families.

Now our operators have carried out a feasibility study to understand how to give the Haku community sustainability and a perspective for the future. In addition to having serious food shortages and economic problems, since they live in close contact these families are at high risk of transmitting COVID-19 and, furthermore, they are not used to observing basic rules of hygiene.

It has emerged that around 100 Haku families would like to return to their vil-

lage of origin to farm the land and meet their food needs, but they lack the knowledge and agricultural equipment to start generating income through farming.

With the Seeds of the Future campaign we want to achieve a double goal:

- increase the agricultural production of the 100 farming families who will return to their village of origin;
- give training on correct rules of hygiene and the prevention of COVID-19 with an awareness program entirely managed by 44 women, volunteers for community health, and aimed at the 8,298 inhabitants of the municipality of Uttargaya.

How to participate in the #seedsofthefuture campaign

You can choose how to participate:

- * With €15 you donate a kit of seeds and tools to a farmer
- * With €40 you can participate in the awareness campaign for the prevention of COVID-19
- * With €100 you contribute to the construction of an irrigation tank

Find out more at asia-ngo.org/hakuen

You can also give the gift of SEEDS OF THE FUTURE to your loved ones and help solidarity and sustainability grow on our planet! Find out how by writing to lfidanzia@asia-ngo.org ©

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Singing New Mekhor to Celebrate 8 December 2020

Adriana Dal Borgo

Those familiar with Khaita Dances know that *Message from Tibet* (MT) is the title of the first series of 108 songs collected by Chögyal Namkha Norbu starting in 2011 and may also know that the book was recently revised and republished by Shang Shung Publications:

(<https://shop.shangshungfoundation.com/en/ebooks/491-e-book-message-from-tibet-through-songs-and-dances-pdf-200000008424.html>)

Some people may also be familiar with the term *Mekhor* (M), which includes 180 songs, divided into 3 groups or *Metreng* of 60 songs each, and is the collection that we have sung and danced with the Master for years.

In 2017, our Teacher decided to modify this second collection and insert a third one: *Barsam*, which literally means 'bridge between', since it is the link between *Message from Tibet* and *Mekhor*.

He therefore dedicated his time in the last months of 2017 and during 2018 to this reorganization, which consisted of moving from the *Mekhor* about thirty songs, all of which had circle dances (*kordro*), and inserting them, together with other new songs, in the *Barsam* collection. He then filled in the empty spaces with completely new songs or with others he had worked on in previous years.

As we all know, 2018 was not an easy year for Rinpoche and his work was often interrupted due to reasons of health. For this reason, some files in the *Mekhor* and *Barsam* collections were unfinished and some places in the *Mekhor* remained empty.

Thanks to the collaboration with some Tibetologists (Lobsang Zatul and Fabian Sanders) we were able to complete the first 70 songs of the *Barsam* and present, with much joy, this beautiful collection of songs and dances on the occasion of Rinpoche's birthday, 8 December 2019.

This year we worked to complete the unfinished files in the *Mekhor*, which we call *Mekhor 2018* to distinguish it from previous versions, but there were still about twenty empty folders ... what to do, present the collection like this or try to complete it?



Singing Khaita Songs with Chögyal Namkhai Norbu at Hotel Callao, Tenerife, 2013.



Dancing to Khaita songs in the old Gönpa tent at Dzamling Gar, Tenerife.

I chose to fill in the empty spaces according to some criteria: I found songs that Rinpoche had already worked on and that he loved very much but had not included for reasons of space. Other songs had 'escaped', as the Maestro said, that is, they had accidentally left the collections during the various reorganizations of the material that Rinpoche continuously made. Some of these 'escaped' songs were subject to scrutiny during the exams of the Khaita instructors.

I chose to dedicate an empty place to honor the immense work and time that the Master dedicated to Khaita with a song of Kyidjam.

Rinpoche really loved the songs by Kyidjam, a singer with a special voice, and said several times, "It would be nice to include her songs but they are not easy for us to follow". However, among the Master's files I

found some songs by this singer with tones that are easier for us to sing, so I thought of inserting one of them to represent our homage and infinite thanks to Rinpoche. ©



Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's Birthday Celebration at Dzamling Gar

Co-Webcasted with Merigar West
December 8, 2020

Naomi Zeitz for The Mirror

The day of Rinpoche's birthday, December 8, went smoothly and joyously in the Gönpa of Dzamling Gar with socially distanced and masked "live" participants and also by webcast from and to Merigar West.

At 8am the day began with a Mandarava Webcast led by Dina Priymak from Merigar West. At 10am there was a Tara practice led by Steven Landsberg and directly after a wonderful performance of new Khaïta dances performed by our very elegant Khaïta team. The Khaïta dances and dancers, many were heard to say after, brought tears to people's eyes as they were remembering and missing the Master who would have thoroughly enjoyed the performance.

The Khaïta performance was a graceful segue to a very successful auction man-



Steven Landsberg guiding Tara practice.

aged by our now experienced and masterful auctioneer Tim Cabot, together with his charming assistants Elena Dumcheva (who is the main coordinator of the auctions) and Yulia Petrova, and the Gakyil and Gakyil assistants managing the international bids by Zoom and Webcast. During the auction we were musically serenaded by the Dzogchen Soundsystem, a newly formed duo comprised of Jan Blumenroth and Richard Stevens, and visually serenaded by the lovely panel of paintings based on the practice of the Six Lokas by Ans Swart that was offered by Ans as a birthday present for Rinpoche. And last but not least, Dzamling Gar is indebted to its tireless webcast and translation team, Sebastien Remy, Carles Jañez Brucet and Vince Li, without whom none of this could ever be pulled off.

After the auction arrived Khaïta for everyone, with a Zoom-cast of Adriana Dal Borgo introducing and explaining the New Mekhor, a collection of Tibetan songs and dances by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, which can be seen at <https://khaïta.com>: the songs, dances, lyrics in Tibetan and Drajoyr phonetics transcription and the translations of the lyrics. After singing some of these new songs, everyone was able to enjoy dancing Khaïta together.

To end the day there was a Vajra Dance practice with costumes as the sun sank into the sea, spectacularly viewed from the perch of the beautiful Gönpa, ending a day filled with tradition, melancholia and happiness, as we celebrated the birth of our peerless Dzogchen Master who no longer walks the earth with us, but remains always near in our hearts, minds and our guruyoga. ©



The auctioneers Tim & Elena.

Tibetan Yoga of Movement & Breathing Weekend

October 30–November 1, 2020
Dzamling Gar

Co-sponsored by Shang Shung
School of Tibetan Medicine and
Atiyoga Foundation

Ellen Hoden-Storrie

Author of 'Nurture Nature & Being Happy'
and Director of Celtic Spiral Healing Center



Thubten Rabgyi teaching meditation and Ilaria Faccioli translating

When I enlisted for the Tibetan Yoga of Movement and Breathing weekend, I wasn't sure what to expect. As someone who runs a wellness business I'm always intrigued by different forms of medicine and so Tibetan was definitely on my list of things to check out. I availed of the opportunity to turn the experience into a weekend retreat and booked myself into a comfortably spacious apartment in the Tibetan Medical House. Just next door were the rooms in which Dr Irina and Medegma give consultations and massage. That night my creaking set of bones and brain went into a trance – I was so relaxed after the hour's treatment with Medegma that I fell asleep on the sofa at 8 and slept for ten hours.

The following morning, our workshop kicked off at the civilized time of 9.30. As soon as I arrived, I was made to feel welcome by Alessandra's warm and wide-open smile. As everyone began talking about yoga mats and cushions alarm bells started going off in my head. It doesn't make much sense on reflection but my optimistic mind had somehow imagined that the poses would be optional. I love yoga but with my spinal trouble I usually have to flounder about on the floor for a good five minutes in-between poses and so tend to avoid formal instruction. Alessandra put me at ease saying that we would all have chairs beside our mats and could work from these if we liked. But somehow – whether it was the gentle ease with which we began before going into the deeper poses or else the warm nature of both Alessandra and Ilaria – I was clamoring up on my feet and back down on the floor in record time.

The class was small and well-spaced out – things have to be these days due to Covid – but somehow people gelled and the room was filled with a nice vibe generated by peer encouragement and gentle guidance. The breathwork activity where we breathed into our bellies first then felt the air fill us up to the brim seemed to really stretch out and relax my insides but the magic moment was when we were left to do the breathing exercises in tandem without instruction. It felt as if we were all connecting to each-others energy and flow and this gave a strong sense of synchronicity. It was at this point I realized that my over-quick and unnecessarily busy mind had totally slowed down.

That said, later that afternoon when I understood that we were all to learn a traditional Tibetan dance together my heart started to race. I thought about scuttling for the door but there were no hallways in which to hide. I would have to brave this one out and hope nobody noticed my two left feet. Turns out that, with enough repetition and some clear instructions even my brain was able to catch up a little and I started to understand the concept of joy behind these dances. Whilst I won't be giving Shakira a run for her money anytime soon, I managed not to fall over and get maybe two – or one – out of every three movements right and so will take that as a win. What was really precious for me in all this was the movement in which everyone turned to the person on their right and bowed – this felt like a beautiful energy exchange connecting us all still further.



Menpa Phuntsog Wangmo on Zoom.

The next day, we had the honor of listening to Menpa Wangmo, head of the Tibetan Medical School speak with Ilaria live via Zoom. Her strength and stillness, deep knowledge and intelligent understanding of the connections between health, breath, our minds and emotions were an inspiration and left me hanging on to hear more.

When I returned home to my husband in El Porís, I was surprised to notice a spaciousness in my chest and between my ribs that I'd never consciously experienced. My brain had slowed its pace, my heart was open and I could remember enough of the weekend's instructions to be able to incorporate the exercises into my morning routine. Sign me up – I'm ready for more. ©



Upcoming Program of Dzamling Gar

January to March, 2021
(This is a preliminary program, changes due to covid can occur)

December
December 21–25
Semdzins Module I
with Elias Capriles – Live & Zoom

December 26–January 1, 2021
Joint Retreat with Merigar West
– Live & Webcast

January
January 4–10
Commentary on Precious Vase Module II
with Elias Capriles – Live & Zoom

January 11–15
Total Embrace: Practice of Jnana Dakini Thugthig
with Steven Landsberg

January 15–17
Presence and Awareness in Daily Life
An Essential Meditation Training in 6 Modules, Module II – Live & Zoom

January 23–27
Breathe
with Fabio Andrico – Zoom

January 28–31
Rhythmic Breathing & Kumbhaka
with Fabio Andrico – Zoom

February
February 6
Garlic Chudlen
with Menpa Phuntsog Wangmo – Zoom

February 12
Losar 2021

February 12–27
Mandarava Retreat – Live & Webcast

March
March 5–7
Mandarava Tsalung The Attainment of Immortal Vajra Life with Sogtig Breathing
with Fabio Andrico – Zoom

March 13–14
Presence and Awareness in Daily Life
An Essential Meditation Training in 6 Modules, Module I – Live & Zoom

March 26–30
7th Lojong
with Fabio Andrico – Zoom

MACO Museum New Website

The Museum of Oriental Art and Culture, or MACO, situated in the historical center of Arcidosso, Tuscany, is home to the rich collection of over 5000 objects of fine Asian arts, crafts and ethnographic artifacts from the Namkhai Collection.

Although the MACO is currently closed to the public due to the pandemic, the Museum is pleased to announce its new website at www.macomuseum.org where visitors can visit the virtual theater of the central atrium of the main gallery and enjoy a 180 degree video documentary filmed in Western Sichuan in 2016 by two Italian film makers. Visitors can also view the exhibition entitled *Meditation in Motion*, which explores the world of Tibetan dance, *Sky Writing, the calligraphic art of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu* and *Lhasa and Beyond*, a photographic exhibition documenting Giuseppe Tucci's 1948 expedition to Central Tibet.

The Museum has a new phone number and public email:
++39 056 41 64 03 35
info@macomuseum.org

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IT HOME THE MUSEUM EXHIBITIONS EDUCATION PLAN YOUR VISIT

"CULTURE IS EVOLUTION"
Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, *tshe Drolok*, 2016, Gold on paper.

NOW ON VIEW
MEDITATION IN MOTION
Foot steps to the sublime

This unique exhibition explores the world of Tibetan sacred dance, from its origins, first experienced in mystical visions and lucid dreams and then passed from Master to disciple, in an unbroken lineage over centuries.

Explore

Back in the Storm – Merigar West Update

As was unfortunately to be expected, after the summer there was a new exponential expansion of Covid-19 all over the world. Italy also went back into the storm, counting thousands of new cases every day and hundreds of deaths, closures and restrictions.

In this storm, on November 27 a friend left us, Elio Guarisco, a brother who had spent so much of his life for the Dzogchen Community. With his ability as a translator he allowed us and continues to allow us to read ancient texts from the Tibetan, giving us access to treasures expressed in a difficult language and for many of us almost inaccessible. With his experience as a practitioner he guided explanations and collective practices, leading each one of us to an increasingly concrete experience of the Teaching. With his careful and precise observations he contributed to evolving the sense of being a Dzogchen Community. With his *joie de vivre* in all circumstances he was always an example of how practice is not an abstract exercise.

We would like to remember him in the words of one of his latest messages:

Dear friends!

Thanks for the concern you have shown for my health condition.

I am being treated in hospital and in one way or another

there is no reason to worry.

If you want to do practice, do for all beings not for me specifically.

Elio.

After spending much of the summer at Merigar, where he guided retreats and courses, Elio returned to his home near Como in mid-September. From there a program of courses and retreats should have started again. Then came the closures and his departure was canceled due to the exponential increase in cases, which particularly affected his area. Elio was hospitalized in early November. His situation gradually worsened, intensive therapy was needed and unfortunately he left us on November 27th around 2.30 pm.

At Merigar we will continue to practice Shitro every Friday at that time. We will miss him enormously.



Past and future events at Merigar

At Merigar the month of September closed with collective practices organized from 22 to 27 September, the date on which two years ago Master Chögyal Namkai Norbu left this earthly life. There was space for a limited number of participants on site for the practices of Guruyoga, Purification, Dance of the Vajra and Khaita, but the possibility for everyone to participate in webcast. September 27 was an extraordinary day. Mount Amiata awoke to the first, abundant snow of the year, a fairly rare event in September, while at dusk a wonderful double rainbow appeared in the sky.

In those days, the “Shapes and Sounds” exhibition was also organized in the Mandala Room (<http://melong.com/sounds-spaces-art-exhibition-merigar/>) and there was a meeting between practitioners who, in small groups, were able to exchange ideas and perspectives on the Community. The meeting was then repeated on November 1st.

From the end of September to October 3, the day in 2020 of the anniversary on which our beloved Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu left this earthly life according to the Tibetan calendar, there was an in-depth course on the Dance of the Song of the Vajra with Adriana Dal Borgo, which ended on October 3 with a Ganapuja and the invocation of Samantabhadra.

In October it was still possible to organize some face-to-face courses, including a *Umed* Tibetan calligraphy course with Kunga Tsering who with infinite kindness and patience guided the participants in this beautiful and artistic form of writing. We have planned a second weekend to

learn *Khyug* cursive writing but this has been postponed until a later date. Also in October, the first of a series of Yantra Yoga weekends planned with Laura Evangelisti was possible, which will be resumed as soon as possible.

Online, on the other hand, Adriana Dal Borgo led several sessions of a Khaita course through Zoom. Given the restrictions and the difficulty of traveling, Prima Mai instead led an in-depth Vajra Dance course requested and followed by practitioners at Kunsangar North, Russia from the Mandala Hall at Merigar.

Health restrictions have increased since November, courses have been suspended and we have started an intensive webcast practice program in collaboration with Dzamling Gar. As per tradition, the days around November 1st were dedicated to Shitro. The rest of the month was devoted mainly to the practice of Tara and December is dedicated to the practice of Mandarava.

From December 26th we are planning an intensive practice retreat according to the instructions of our Master, compiled for the 1990 Easter retreat and held also this August at Merigar.

In the meantime, our dear Gekö Kostin and Laura Borel have left for Germany! We wish them well for their new adventure. The position of Gekö is vacant and we are organizing a temporary solution. If you are interested, here you can find a description of the tasks of the Gekö (<https://www.merigar.it/en/dzogchen-community/geko-and-gakyil/>). Write to office@dzogchen.it for information and applications.

Projects and works at Merigar

In recent months, various works have been undertaken, partly related to projects co-financed by the UBI (Italian Buddhist Union), namely "The Path of Awareness" and work at the Yellow House for improving areas open to the public. You can find details of these projects on the Merigar website (www.merigar.it) by clicking on Members area and then on Projects.

In brief, "The Path of Awareness" project foresees the realization of a meditative/naturalistic path, which crosses part of Merigar and connects with the network of hiking trails (path n.13 of the Italian Alpine Club and the Parco Faunistico path). A part of this planned path was already pre-existing, enjoyed spontaneously by practitioners and occasional hikers and visitors; the project intends to redevelop, expand and enhance it. The initial project of the path drawn up for its construction dates back to 2018 but an in-depth analysis necessary for its execution revealed critical environmental issues, above all connected to hydro-geological issues and the land's absorption of rainwater. What emerged from the ongoing maintenance of the woodland, from topographical surveys and from the first hydro-geological study, led to a rethinking of the path layout. Another significant aspect in this rethinking of the route was the need not to include the Great Stupa of Enlightenment and all its surrounding area in the general itinerary, as a means of communicating the indispensable respect for the sacredness of the place.

A part of this project also provides for the improvement of the areas open to the public at Merigar, optimizing some of the spaces on the ground floor and the external spaces of the Yellow House, with the extension of the large room towards the adjacent room currently used as storage and which will see the opening of two large windows on the south side.

Community life, which for years has seen a considerable number of visitors in the summer, will benefit by the re-organization of the outdoor space in front of the large room at the Yellow House making it a place to pause, rest and meet.

Visits were organized in this period with the landscape architect, the geologist, the engineer and the nurserymen involved in the projects to organize and plan the work on the path and the design of the work on the Yellow House.

The works for now have involved:

- The layout of the path, where the works are carried out with the use of excavators. Visits by the professionals involved allowed us to verify the work done so far.
- The lakes and the water management system. In particular, the upper lake has undergone various remodeling interventions. As soon as weather conditions permit it will be emptied to proceed with the waterproofing of the bottom and setting up its drainage. Other drainage will also be done to collect water in both lakes and allow the surrounding fields to dry out. At the Yellow House, all the drains and water pipes of the bathrooms and the kitchen have been checked. We will proceed with the reorganization of the drainage, improving and making water management more ecological through biofiltration.



- Around the Great Stupa of Enlightenment 1000 flower bulbs have been planted. Planting different species of flowers means that flowering will take place at different times for most of the year.
- A drainage system has been dug around the Cinerarium and good quality earth



has been added around it to encourage the grass to grow.

- The Maestro's retreat house was made safe by protecting it mainly from water: the roof was fixed, a rain gutter was installed and the area above the house was cleared of stones and earth. In addition, a wall was built for the drainage of water.



Projects at Merigar and Beyond Seeds of Awareness

Already in the 2019–2020 school year, thanks to the **Journey through Self-Knowledge** project made with the 8 per thousand tax contribution from UBI (Italian Buddhist Union), Yantra Yoga and Meditation experts from Merigar were involved in school programs for primary and secondary schools in Arcidosso and Roccalbegna and the Provincial Center for Adult Education (CPIA) of Arcidosso. The feedback was very positive and children, teens and adults were able to experiment with weekly Yantra Yoga experiential classes and a meditation session.

In a year as difficult as 2020, a reason for joy was the approval of the project "Seeds of Awareness: starting from self-knowledge to rediscover the deep bonds that exist between human beings and cultivate empathic relationships" presented by Merigar in partnership with ASIA, which has allowed us to continue bringing the experiences and activities that characterize us to schools.

Why Seeds of Awareness? To help create a more harmonious and inclusive society starting from a greater awareness of each one of us. As Chögyal Namkhai Norbu taught us, "If we need peace we need evolution and we must develop evolution, and not revolution, in the individual condition".

And so we decided to start with children, the seeds of the future, with a series

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Photo by Jono Nussbaum

A Year in the Library

Margherita Pansa, librarian

At the end of 2019, when the project “Working with the words and texts of Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and Tibetan Buddhism” was launched in the Library, no one could have imagined how much more complicated everything would be in the year to come. Yet, amidst difficulties and compromises, the project has gone ahead and the part co-financed with the 8 per 1000 contribution from the UBI (Italian Buddhist Union) has been completed.

The project on the one hand involved Shang Shung Publications for the training of new editors and the publication of works by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, and on the other the Library with the scanning and indexing of manuscripts, the cataloging of texts in Western languages and the creation of cultural events such as the Library Talks.

Several projects have been undertaken in the library: the first two works concerned the unique and rare material in the Tibetan section. The library houses several manuscripts and rare texts: some manuscripts are the works of Changchub Dorje, while others were identified during the cataloging of the Tibetan section of the library and have very different characteristics.

The works of Changchub Dorje, handwritten and other, obviously have a particular value for the Dzogchen Community. The texts in this collection had already been scanned and indexed over the years, however, the Tibetan fonts used at the time of indexing were obsolete and had to be converted to Unicode to remain readable. Once converted, it was necessary to check the result. As foreseen by the project, the conversion into Unicode and the checking of the indexes and scans was done for 10 texts from the collection of Changchub Dorje, although the work will continue for the entire collection.

The volumes were dealt with in the order in which they were found on the shelf. To recall this order, the volumes have been assigned a new code (CCD1, CCD2, etc.) in addition to the input number, which generally they already have. For each text a new index was created in which both a Tibetan Unicode font and the Wylie tran-

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of activities in primary schools in Rome, Naples and the municipalities of Amiata, which favor contact with one's inner world as a prerequisite for establishing empathic relationships and perceiving the interdependence that binds all living beings.

Despite the difficulties due to the pandemic, the project started in September. In the Amiata area, the meetings were led by Dina Priymak and concluded with success in various schools on Amiata. Most of the sessions took place outdoors, in schoolyards. The children were happy and had a lot of fun reproducing the sounds, movements and positions of Kumar Kumari Yantra Yoga, and relaxing at the end of the sessions. In Rome, with Constance Soehnlén and Laura Graci, the path of Yantra Yoga – Kumar Kumari had a rather irregular start: the lessons started with great enthusiasm on the part of the young students, teachers and school administrations, but unfortunately they were suspended throughout the month due to anti Covid19 restrictions and the obligation for children to wear masks during yoga hours. Now Laura and Constance hope to start over soon, trying to adapt the lessons to the circumstances and focusing the work on breathing, emotions and relaxation.

Another ongoing activity is a workshop of drawing and fairy tales from the world to introduce children to the principle of interdependence. Two people, Valerio Giaccone and Kunga, lead the children in the exploration of the principle of interdependence starting from the story of the Tibetan fairy tale of the four harmonious brothers. At each meeting, the young students actively participate in the creation of the story by representing the various characters with manual and artistic work and the use of different techniques and materials:

drawing, collage, play dough, paper and lots of creativity.

The third activity for primary schools will begin in February: paths of awareness and empathy to educate children to listen to themselves, their bodies and their emotions as a starting point for establishing empathic relationships, based on non-judgmental understanding of others.

And Seeds of Awareness will also be planted in civil society, with activities aimed at an adult audience. An exhibition of photographs by Enrico Dell'Angelo will be organized in Rome and Arcidosso and will narrate, through images and stories of spiritual masters and sacred places of Tibet, but also of common people, the treasures safeguarded by Tibetan culture that make Tibet and the its people an internationally recognized symbol of spirituality.

And to conclude, there will be a cycle of two workshops on the principles of Awareness and Interdependence, to introduce the theme of complete presence in the here and now, of the non-judgmental awareness of one's own spiritual view as a way to establish a good relationship with oneself and with others, based on the knowledge of the infinite network of links that connect all living beings, for which nothing exists separate from all the rest. ©



Town and Country in the UK

The UK community currently has just over 200 members, representing a drop of about 20% in numbers since 2018. But as some of us have upgraded to become sustaining members, the loss of income has not been too drastic. Nevertheless, it does sometimes seem almost miraculous that we are still able to run two lings – our urban, cultural centre in London, Lekdanling, and our rural retreat centre in Wales, Kunselling. Our mortgage on Kunselling will be completely paid off in 2024 – a major milestone.

Lekdanling is the home of the UK branch of the Shang Shung Institute, which continues to put on an eclectic programme. Before the coronavirus lockdown began, the institute hosted several events, including: a talk by James Low; a lecture on “Blake and Buddhism” by Francesca Freemantle, translator from the community of Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*; a discussion of “Time and Beyond” with Dr. Fabian Sanders; and a contemporary approach to yoga from the UK’s main Yantra Yoga teacher John Renshaw, entitled “Yoga the Scientific Perspective”. We were also visited by monks from the Drepung Kongpo Khangsten monastery, who created an Avalokiteshavara sand mandala for display in the ling, before its



dissolution and disposal in the lake of a local London park.

At Kunselling in February, Liane Graff led a retreat on the construction of the Namkha and the practice of Sang. Kasia Zejmo, a member of the Polish community, was stranded at the ling during lockdown – unable to fly home to Warsaw – and so became a useful caretaker of the property during those empty months. Once restrictions lifted, our members were

quick to seize the opportunity of personal retreat in the beauty and seclusion of the Welsh countryside and we were even able to run two careful, masked and socially-distanced Vajra Dance retreats, under the guidance of one of our Vajra Dance teachers Cindy Faulkner.

The ubiquitous Zoom has done much to preserve the bonds of sangha and seems now to have given us a new dimension to community life. The Shang Shung Institute

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Reading Aloud section is made up of short Tibetan and Oriental stories, parables, and tales read and interpreted by professional actors to whom our heartfelt thanks go. The section on reflections and insights on issues related to Buddhism, Tibet and the East in general started on 29 May, thirty years after the official inauguration of the Gönpa and the Merigar Library. In this section the talks are in both Italian and English. You can find them on the Merigar website, on the YouTube channel and on the Library’s Facebook page.

We would like to thank those who participated in this project with enthusiasm. In writing these words, we cannot fail to mention Elio Guarisco, the most assiduous of the contributors to our events. His loss is enormous for many, even for our library of which Elio was a regular user and promoter. With his intervention on the “The Lives of the 84 Siddhas of Ancient India: an ethical contradiction in

Buddhism?” in 2018, we inaugurated the first edition of Library Talks. His collaboration continued in 2019 with two talks, “Beyond the distracted mind” and “Infinite Ocean of Knowledge. Kongtrul Lodrö Taye: the eclectic Lama protagonist of the spiritual renaissance of Eastern Tibet of the 19th century”. Also in the online edition of 2020, Elio generously filmed two talks, of which only one is currently edited and published.

Donations to the Library

Also this year we have received many volumes as gifts. We therefore want to thank (in alphabetical order) Costantino Maria Albini, Cvetko Jovanovic, Fabio Andrico, Giacomella Orofino, Giorgio Dallorto, Jim Valby, Luca Villa, Martha Boyden, Michela Clemente and Peter Eisenegger for enriching the collections in the library! Special thanks also to Shang Shung Publications that always gives us new releases in different languages.

If you would like to donate books to the library, please write to library@dzogchen.it

The projects you have read about were only partially funded by UBI and above all they must be continued! For this we need your support, because a library, by its nature, does not create monetary income, but gives great cultural enrichment!

Support us financially by sending a contribution:

By Paypal https://www.paypal.com/donate/?cmd=_s-xclick&hosted_button_id=3WY5BDHPRHE96&source=url

Or bank draft:

Dzogchen Community of Merigar
Loc. Merigar 58031 Arcidosso, Grosseto Italy
UBI Bank, Castel del Piano GR Italy branch
current account no. 1718 ABI 3111 CAB 72190 CIN G

IBAN code IT65 G031 1172 1900 0000 0001 718
SWIFT/BIC code BLOPIT22XXX

The reason for the donation should be “donation for the Library project” ©



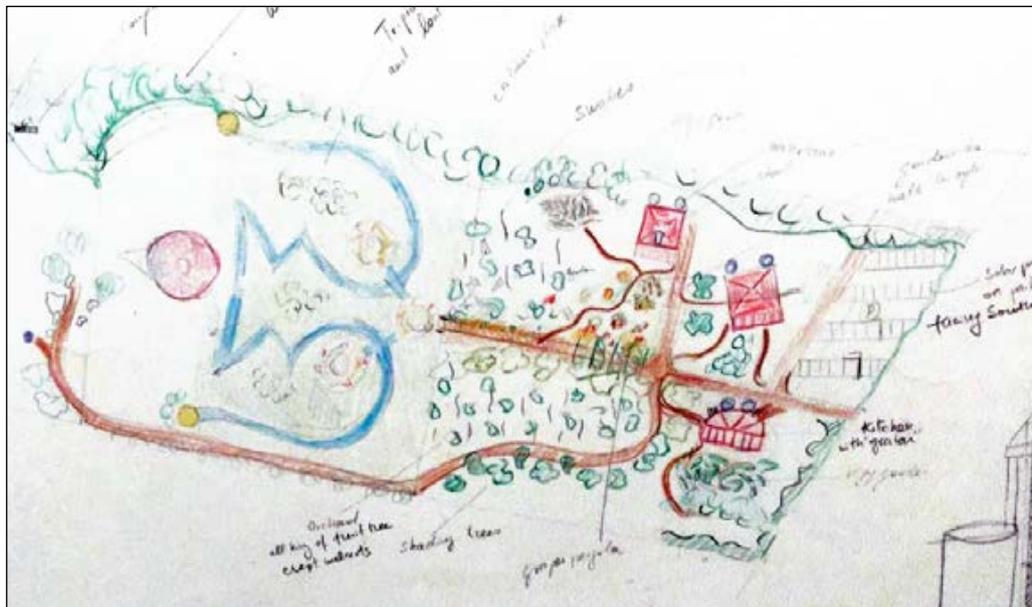
has organized a number of broadcasts, such as: “Hanging and Displaying Thangkas,” with Anne Bancroft, Senior Conservator at the V&A Museum; “The Murals in the Temple of Great Contemplation,” with Dr. Fabian Sanders; and “The Dzogchen Murals of the Lukhang Temple,” with SMS teacher and scholar Jacob Winkler.

Meanwhile, Zoom ensured that a superb retreat on Inanadakini, led by Steven Landsberg, was accessible to many more people than would ever have been able to travel to Kunselling. We are also beginning to do regular online group practice within our UK community, beginning with three weeks of Mandarava practice during the auspicious tenth lunar month. Keeping it fairly informal, taking it in turns to lead and allowing a little time to say hello to one another, this is proving to be a nice way of keeping in touch with friends during these strange times.

<https://dzogchencommunityuk.org> ©



Photo by Rowan Wylie



Merigar East Developing the Oasis

Alexandru Anton

During the weekend 27–29 November we had a tree-planting weekend at Merigar East, Romania. This is part of an older project started in 2009 with the help of Saviana Parodi Delfino, meant to maximize the natural potential of the Gar, regenerate the soil and make it an oasis of beauty and abundance. As you probably know, the Gar is situated in the middle of agricultural fields on relatively flat land – which makes it very vulnerable to strong winds that can freeze your bones in the winter and quickly dry out entire trees in the summer. In order to offer protection from this, we started planting a windshield consisting of around 700 trees around the used area of the Gar, from the gate around the Multifun House, behind the camping and then around the Gekō house – finishing up with a massive patch of trees right next to the parking lot, as the Northeast corner is the most vulnerable.

We managed to contract a tractor from the village and scratched a few deep lines in the soil in order to catch any rainwater we might get around the year (around 380 mm per year) and progressively accumulate humidity. The ditches are more or less on the contour lines of the land – perpendicular to the slope which also tends to descend from the Northeast direction.

The trees used so far are Acacia (black locust) and Turkestan Elm, as they are fast

growing and can give us a quick start. We also intend to use the metal fence as a second layer of protection, letting various vines grow on it – also making it more visually appealing.

To counteract the hot and dry summer winds, we placed a drip-irrigation along this first layer of trees and this should ensure an increased success rate. Now before the heat kicks in next year we have time to add some mulch – adding sawdust, cartons, leaves or dry grass around the little trees – and this will protect the soil, increase humidity and thus stimulate the development of earthworms, fungi and other beneficial organisms.

This project was realized with the help of Jaromir, Magda and myself and eleven volunteers who were generous enough to offer their time and energy during the weekend. I think this activity in itself was fairly rewarding, as several persons mentioned how happy they were to have the chance to plant trees for the first time in their lives. It also offered plenty of opportunities for collaboration, like one person digging and another following with a little tree eager to settle into its new place, with its roots full of mud and cow dung mixture – but of course we won't debate here the strange preferences trees might have.

Magda took care of the culinary delights, spoiling the volunteers with delicious food and apple pie. In general we are very glad we can offer homemade food and a lot of products from the locals near Merigar East. At some point I had to remind the volunteers this was not a food-tasting gathering. Actually, I'm just teasing. People were very

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eager to work and they were hard to stop – one can easily realize the huge amount of work that needs to be done at the Gar and they wanted to contribute as much as possible during their stay.

On Sunday evening, after the tree-planting was done, a gentle, but very long rain fell over the Gar, which made me very happy and got me thinking about this great synchronicity and other kinds of gods and demons.

We will be continuing as much as possible this landscaping and soil regeneration project for the Gar and are grateful for any help, be it physical work, or donations. These things take time, of course, but those who regularly visit Merigar East can already enjoy the increased number of shady areas, for example. Not to mention delicious organic fruits and vegetables, a quick walk and a handpick away! ☺

News from Kunsangar South, Crimea

Kunsangar South Gakyil

It's not easy to sum up the results of this year as most of our plans were cancelled or re-scheduled, nevertheless life goes on despite the unstable situation in the world. When ongoing events are cancelled, time and energy for inner work are released so during almost the whole of last year many transformations took place at the Gar and a lot of activities were done which we would like to share it with you.

Our Vajra kin from Poland, Greg Ladra and Kasha Dmitrenko, who work in the field of landscape design and have successfully realized many projects, developed a project last autumn to create green spaces near our Stupa and offered the project to the Gar for free. We had asked them to develop a project for the Gar that would consider the particularities of the climate, and they included local easy-to-survive plants which do not need much water and also fill



the space around the Stupa in a harmonious way.

The project onsite was realized by our gardener Natasha Gerasimova and geko Alexey Shadrov. Last autumn we planted cypresses and junipers, then we organized a small nursery-garden, and not long ago some fully-grown plants were bedded out. We waited for the soil to have suitable conditions as the last couple of years in the Crimea have been very dry. We created

a drip watering system in this area that will support plants in summer and in the months of drought.

The camping area is also being developed. We organized space inside the summer kitchen for people to use and store food in a more comfortable way. The foundations of the pergola were strengthened. Thanks to the groundskeeper Igor, Sergey Sedler and geko Alexey a test wooden mini-house was built. The house was very



popular during the summer. In future we plan to install several such houses in the camping area – it will be a warm and comfortable alternative to staying in a tent.

Rinpoche's house, which now serves as a dormitory, was renovated and some construction flaws were eliminated. The groundskeeper Igor, gekö Alexey, karma-yogis and workers reinstalled the external finishing of the house and patched up cracks between panels. Now the house is more warm and beautiful!

In the summer we survived a loss that was not easy for us – our beloved friend and guard dog at the Gar, Daddy, was hit by a car. He had lived at the Gar for seven years, worked as a guardian and was our true friend. Daddy will always remain in our hearts.

However, a new resident has appeared at the Gar – a puppy from a hunting breed that we call Tashi. In summer Tashi grew bigger and stronger, got used to sleeping in a doghouse, became friends with cats and now pursues hares so that they do not eat young plants.

Although the summer and autumn retreat programs were cancelled due to quarantine measures, people came to the Gar to do personal retreats as soon as limitations for individuals were removed. The dark retreat house was in big demand and was booked for weeks, and for many people it was their first dark retreat experience. We received feedback with gratitude from practitioners. People were happy to practice and stay at the Gar. Many of the visitors to the Gar offered their labor in their free time: some would help with cleaning, others with making the place more beautiful and we are very grateful for that.

On Rinpoche's anniversary, besides webcast practices, there was a vast Sang

and Serkyem offering and a Ganapuja. Some people from a friendly community called Yeshe Khorlo arrived. They offered

the Gönpa of Kunsangar South. We express our gratitude to Raimondo Bultrini and the Dzamling Gar Gakyil.



Building the new joinery and the finished work.



Rinpoche's newly renovated house.

a precious gift to the Gar – a sprout of the Bodhi tree's seed.

In 2019 a relic, a fragment of a wool robe that had touched Rigdzin Changchub Dorje's body, was given to the Gar by Dzamling Gar. It was offered to Dzamling Gar by one of Rinpoche's close disciples. Now it has been placed with the salt that touched Rinpoche's body, and remains in a Stupa in



Tashi.

In summer the old well started to provide water to the Gar once again when we noticed that its water level had risen. Now the water systems of the Gar have become more capacious.

A joinery has appeared in the Gar! An open part of the warehouse has been renovated: we laid down a floor, installed cold-proof walls, windows, made a door by ourselves, set up the wiring and organised a working area. Now the carpentry work can be done more easily and in a more comfortable way. There are already

» continued on the following page



Северный Кунсангар

8 декабря 13:00
 Чингиз Ринпоче Мудру
 «Об истории и культуре Тибета»
 (присоединяйтесь к трансляции)

ОБЩЕБУДДИЙСКИЙ ОНЛАЙН ФОРУМ
АРЬЯ САНГХА МОНЛАМ
 28 ноября – 14 декабря

Gekó Marina and Gakyil Roman presenting Kunsangar North.

Kunsangar North at Arya Sangha Monlam on Rinpoche's Birthday

Marina Novitskaya
 Gekó at Kunsangar North, near Moscow

As everybody knows on December 8 the whole Dzogchen Community celebrates the birthday of our precious Master, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. This day is usually full of practices, and many people arrive at Kunsangar North to spend it together, participate in collective practices and communicate. We have

a festive Ganapuja, tea drinking and other joyful events.

This year we took part in the Arya Sangha Monlam which was organised online and has become a forum for many friendly Buddhist sanghas. We happily participated in this initiative as Rinpoche paid respect to all Buddhist schools and the doors of Kunsangar North are always open for great teachers of different traditions. Rinpoche interacted with other communities so the Gar also uses such an opportunity.

Our wonderful instructors took part in this event. Sasha Pubants, Igor Berkhin, Ulyana Sikolova, Valeria Spasskaya, Ekaterina Kyuppar, and Vita Adamenko conducted open sessions and we held online lessons of Khaita and Yantra Yoga. There was also a workshop on the Tibetan art of

Thangkas where people could get to know the sacred proportions that are used and draw the Buddha's eyes.

We also did a presentation of Kunsangar North as part of the Dzogchen Community Mandala and made people familiar with the art of Namkha weaving. We helped to give a general idea of what the Dzogchen Community is and the many methods transmitted by our Precious Master. They are all so perfect that even coming into contact with any of them can help to establish a connection with the Teaching and be an impetus to internal harmony.

The collaboration between the Arya Sangha and Kunsangar North was really joyful and made us confident that limitations cannot become obstacles to our intention to interact and keep the Teaching alive. ©

» continued from previous page
 the first carpentry creations that we will describe below.

In the new joinery we made some benches for the area near the Sangkhang so that many more people can sit there.

The benches turned out to be comfortable and attractive.

It's difficult to make plans for the next year yet as this year has shown us that all plans may change. We are carefully watching the current changes in the world

and will plan our activities when we have more clarity about the upcoming summer. Thanks to everyone who has supported the Gar with their assistance, time and good intentions! ©

Samtengar, Yichun, China



June 8–14, 2020 Yantra Yoga Course (series I & II) with Tracy Ni.



August 9–15, 2020 Vajra Dance of the Song of Vajra with Wes Guo.



October 1–7, 2020 SMS course – Lojongs and Semdzins with Wes Guo.



October 8–10, 2020 SMS course – Essence of the nine vehicles and Rushen with Wes Guo.



October 1–7, 2020 Yantra Yoga Base Course – Eight Lungsang Movements with Tracy Ni.

News from Namgyalgar in Australia

Gar Development

In late August the Gakyil lodged an application with the Sunshine Coast Council to extend and revise the original Namgyalgar Development Application which was due to expire. The Gakyil is pleased to report that the Council has granted approval for the DA to be extended for another two years, and for a personal retreat cabin to be constructed next year. Special funds reserved in Namgyalgar's bank accounts and donations received from Community members will be used to build the cabin. If you would like to make a donation towards the new retreat cabin please contact Sean: read.sean62@gmail.com

New Caretakers and Air BnB

After being delayed by border closures due to Covid-19, Namgyalgar's new caretakers Joe Banffy and Carolyn Fleming and their

daughter Harriet arrived at the start of November. They have been busy with learning how to care for the Gar and have provided the Gakyil with a comprehensive diary of their first month on the Gar, which has included a lot of practical preparation for upkeep and maintenance, including how to maintain the Gar pool. They have been busy preparing the AirBnB, updating the Wi-Fi, and doing many repairs including comprehensive cleaning and painting of the house indoors and out. They have also been working on the Gar property to reduce bushfire hazards, keeping the grass mowed and gardens tidy, and more.

After much work and preparations, the Namgyalgar AirBnB will open soon. All visitors to the Gar will be asked to sign a COVID register with their name and phone number in accordance with Health Guide-



lines. Guests looking for a fantastic experience of nature with ambiance, comfort and cleanliness and newly updated Wi-Fi will be welcome. It is anticipated that the AirBnB will generate income to cover the Gar operational costs.

Namgyalgar Retreat Program

Retreats and courses at Namgyalgar remain suspended due to the Covid pandemic, however with restrictions easing in Australia it's anticipated activities will recommence at the Gar during 2021, the program of which will be publicised once completed. Meanwhile online activities such as collective practice, open and restricted Yantra Yoga and Breathe and Santi Maha Sangha study are continuing. As well another online Sangha retreat will be held 6 to 13 December, following the successful one held in September, which included a webcast replay of Rinpoche's teachings on the 'Essence of Longchen's 25 Spaces', and coincided with the second anniversary of Rinpoche's parinirvana.

Contact: www.dzogchen.org.au
namgyalgar.secretary@gmail.com

Tsegyalgar East Massachusetts, USA

Tsegyalgar East would like to thank our precious Rinpoche for all the Teachings he gave us, our global (local and international) Vajra family, all our marvelous practice leaders, our generous instructors, and our wonderful translators for being the silver lining throughout these COVID-19 filled months of 2020.

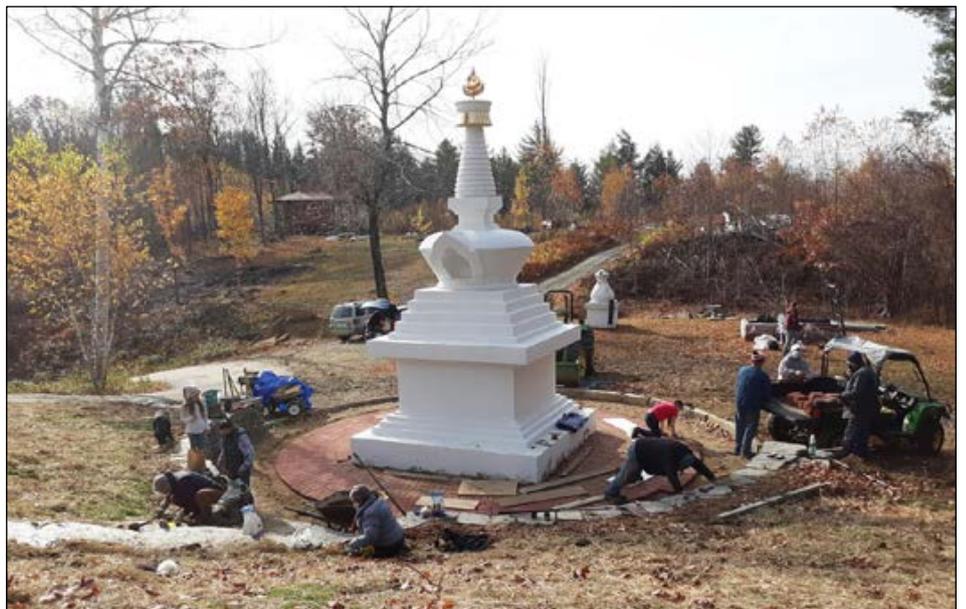
Thanks to our entire sangha's commitment and the marvels of technology, we continue to practice together daily online, and support one another during these very difficult times. It is a comfort and a joy to practice with our worldwide Vajra family whose Zoom images appear on our computer screens whether they are a few miles down the road or halfway across the world.

Since March 2020, all of Tsegyalgar East's formal programming has been online, with only some informal summer practices on Khandroling attended by a few locals. We have managed an active online weekly schedule inclusive of Ganapujas with Vajra Dance of 12 A, Mandarava, Yantra Yoga, Practice of the Precious Vase, Inanadakini, Guardian, and Shitro among others. You have joined us for practice retreats like Dream Yoga, Tara, Mandarava, Inana Dakini, and Understanding the Primordial State. This week, during Rinpoche's Birthday Anniversary week we sit together as we listen to him teach us the Khordas Rangdrol from the Dra Thalgyur Tantra.

You, our dear Vajra family have not only supported Tsegyalgar East's programs, and reinforced our sense of global community through practice, but you have also helped us fund the restoration and landscaping of the Khandroling Stupa.

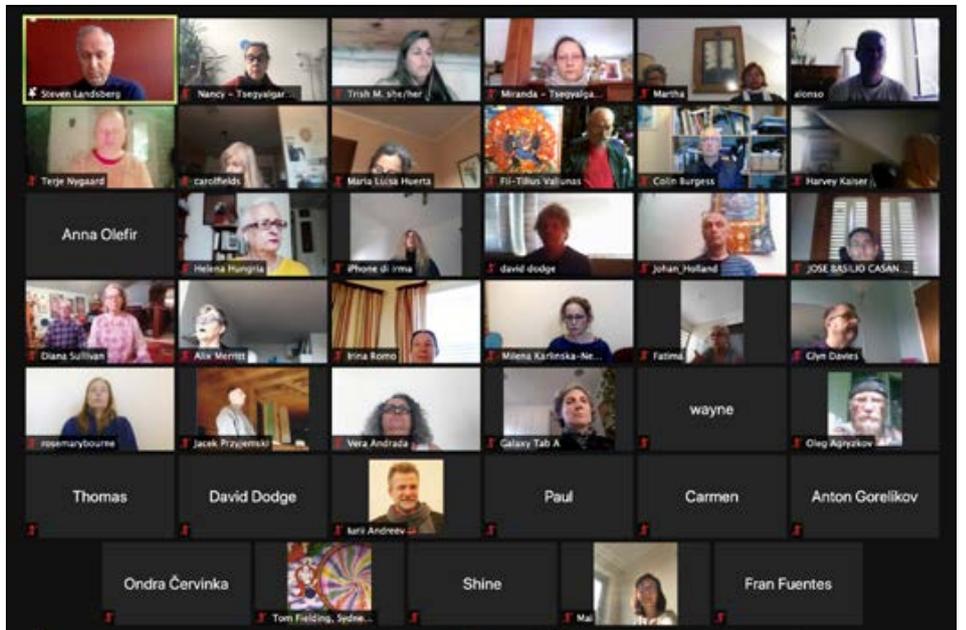
We look forward to seeing you soon in a post pandemic world.

With deep gratitude,
Tsegyalgar East

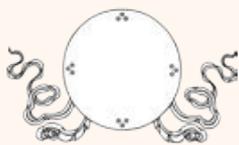


Landscaping the renovated Stupa.

Photo by Kathleen Fekete



Zoom Course with Steven Landsberg.



THE MIRROR

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Be Angry

by His Holiness the Dalai Lama
Edited by Noriyuki Ueda
Hampton Roads Publishing 2019
Paperback 128 pages

John DiLeva-Halpern Nov. 30, 2020

BE ANGRY is a pocket size manual of accessible and terse instructions, perspectives and affirmations easily referenced as we navigate the tsunami of injustice and imbalance we face.

The topic of anger is clearly central to today's times. Despite the pandemonium and tragedies in the world which have occupied me, I decided to read this, the only book I've been able to read cover-to-cover, because of its value to social transformation right now.

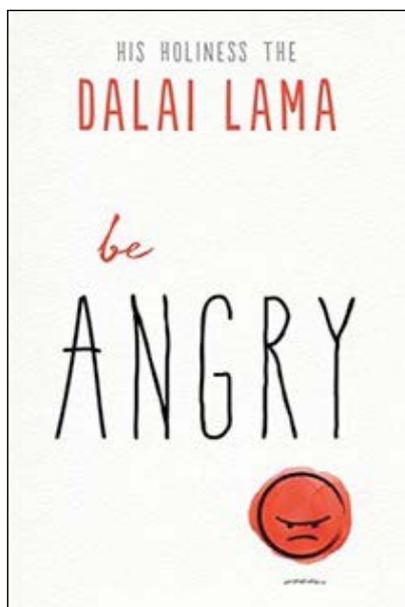
Judging a book by its cover is never an advisable practice and this book's title may instantly repel the western educated Buddhist or Buddhism enthusiast. Many "fundamentalist" Buddhist communities reject identifying with anger. Their rejection is a toxic, vigilant cocktail of self-criticism and righteous judgement of other people's anger.

What His Holiness is serving up is that this attitude of denying justifiable anger is not only a waste of energy and time, but it leads to self-loathing in individuals and within communities. It causes hostility toward self and reinforces the destructive conditioning that severs us from the real world.

BE ANGRY, edited from a conversation with the Dalai Lama and cultural anthropologist, Noriyuki Ueda, qualifies and gently repudiates the conditioned anger that many people dangerously repress, and that psychotherapy is said to "liberate." This anger, which BE ANGRY examines, is not the ego infused anger that we are taught is one of the three "afflictive emotions" or "poisons" seen in the sutras and tantras. It is not the destructive anger that Thich Nhat Hanh references in his book, "ANGER."

The anger referred to in this book is invigorating and empowering when expressed as a pro-active and pure response to transgressions like the exploitation of fellow sentient beings and our environment.

The title relates to the emotions and energy coursing through our physical being, altruistically felt through our interface with all other beings and the environment.



We can use anger empathetically to bring positive change in the world. To suppress that is to suppress our basic, vibrant interdependency and sublime interconnection with life and the universe.

His Holiness's emphasizes that altruistic anger is life affirming and a potent force in evolutionary change when its energy is directed toward solving society's problems.

H.H. encourages us to discriminate between three types of anger. The first is a compassionate, protective anger of a mother warning her child. The second is the 'moral compass' anger arising in response to social injustice and environmental exploitation. The third is the reactive and toxic anger.

He encourages the unrelenting pursuit of justice and the sustaining of this 'moral compass anger' until justice and balance are reached. Consequently, the object of our anger is not toxically directed toward individuals, but rather, proactively toward circumstances which we know to be out of balance, amoral, unethical and unjustifiable.

The abuse of humanity and environment, so prevalent now, is what makes this book especially timely and relevant.

Strategically placed enlarged text "billboards" punctuate the book to highlight key concepts.

One of the threads of BE ANGRY, which I found fascinating in conversation with Noriyuki Ueda, is how H.H. identifies and criticizes as a 'sidetrack,' the practice of ritual for the sake of ritual; ritual for the sake of financial gain; ritual based in blind faith and ritual in ignorance of the purpose of ritual.

As a Buddhist student for over 35 years and teacher of meditation from the Nying-mapa, Dzogchen, tradition (of HH Dudjom Rinpoche), I've understood rituals as placeholders which neutralize the confusion and obstacles that typically interfere with our clear perception of reality and the direct experience of interconnection.

The effectiveness of a ritual depends on the practitioners' capacity to conduct the ritual and immerse in it while remaining cognitive of both its power to effect outer transformation and its temporal nature or impermanence as a path or method. My own perspective is: Ritual creates a holding space, the placeholder to purify our obstacles so as to experience reality and interconnectivity directly. Ritual, in and of itself, is not the goal or the purpose of practice or the tradition.

In the context of "ritual," the appearance of the word "should" in BE ANGRY might also be analyzed. His Holiness's apparent use of "should" could easily be understood as saying, "We should be angry about these conditions," a kind of Puritanical SHOULD. But to perform anger AS IF commanded by the Dalai Lama would be to mechanize anger, turning it into a meaningless and dangerous ritual. That would fetishize anger, making it a performative exercise disconnected from the more deeply motivated empathetic anger which I sense is the Dalai Lama's intent.

Is the Dalai Lama telling us in BE ANGRY, when he is again emphasizing that Buddhism should be seen as a science of the mind, that *to obsess on 'My' anger is to be addicted to self-concept, to ritualize/cherish self and be driven by reactive anger?* And therefore, that to be attached to "Our Anger" – a morally enraged and informed anger, is to inhabit the collective universal "I" and to live responsibly in reality through social engagement?

My answer is YES, and now more than ever, BE ANGRY. Leave the cushion and get busy – together. ©

John DiLeva Halpern, artist and filmmaker of REFUGE and TALKING WITH THE DALAI LAMA, WAKING BUDDHA LIVE and Co-founder of INSTITUTE FOR CULTURAL ACTIVISM INTERNATIONAL
©John DiLeva Halpern, 2020

A Tibetan Master in Naples

A great amount of material has been recorded and printed regarding the Master's teaching and his activities since the founding of Merigar, the first Dzogchen Gar, in the eighties, but there are far fewer sources that actually recount the early days of Rinpoche's life in Naples and his first teachings in the 1970s before the Dzogchen Community was established in Tuscany. In this issue of *The Mirror*, we are pleased to offer you some personal accounts by some of his first students from Naples and an interview with Adriano Clemente that covers the time that Rinpoche was in Naples up to the founding of Merigar.

Some of this material was originally published in issue III of *The Mirror*, August 2011, and has been revised.

Meeting the Master

An Interview with Adriano Clemente

The Mirror: Adriano, as one of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's earliest students, we would like to ask you about how you met Rinpoche in the 1970s when he was teaching Yantra Yoga in Naples, and some information about his activities until the time when Merigar, the first Gar, was established in Italy.

Adriano Clemente: I was not there when Rinpoche started teaching Yantra Yoga in the original group in Naples because I did not meet him until January 1975. What I know is that starting in the sixties, Rinpoche was sometimes invited by different cultural associations or by ISMEO to give lectures on Tibetan yoga or tantras, and after some of these lectures people asked if he could teach Yantra Yoga.

In Naples a certain Procaccini, who was organizing courses such as Japanese



Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and his family.

martial arts, Akido, Tai Kwando, and so on, requested Rinpoche several times to teach Yantra Yoga and at one point Rinpoche accepted and started to teach in the Palazzetto dello Sport in 1971. At the time Rinpoche was living in Torre del Greco, a small town near Naples. When he started to teach many people came to his courses such as Nicoletta Liguori and Roberto Ventrella. He made friends with them and went to live with Nicoletta and Roberto in a villa in Gaiola in Naples.

Rinpoche continued to teach at the Palazzetto dello Sport for a couple of years. In November of 1974, when I had entered the dharma in some way, the first thing I wanted to learn was yoga but at the time the only kind of yoga in Naples was hatha yoga with an Indian swami called Satyananda. This means that in that year Rinpoche was not teaching, although he resumed the following year. In January 1975, right after I met him, he started to give a new Yantra Yoga course from January to June.

M: And you took that course?

AC: I did not attend the whole course, but some of my friends did and I would sometimes go there and ask Rinpoche questions.

From 1972 to 1974, especially when Rinpoche was living at the Gaiola with Nicoletta and Roberto, there was a small group of people who started to receive some teachings and explanations from him as well as practices such as the Vajrasattva

purification practice. It was a small group with around six or seven people including Gennaro Anziano, Antonio Morgione, Sergio Campodonico, Ciro Marolda, Natale Musella and others.

The time I really entered Rinpoche's circle was October 1975. He was living in Pozzuoli at that time, a place near Naples, and every Saturday we would meet at his home, he would offer tea and everybody would ask him questions. Usually there was a stable group of ten to twelve people including Ramon Prats, who had met Rinpoche in 1972 or 1973 and had come from Spain especially to meet him and to study Tibetan at the Università Orientale.

Rinpoche would reply to all kinds of questions about Tibetan Buddhism, spirituality, Christ and Buddha and some of these questions and answers he wrote down in a book called *Introduction to Dzogchen in Sixteen Answers*. Eight of the questions came from this period. Whenever Rinpoche thought the questions and answers were interesting for the future, he would write them down which is how that book was born. (This book has recently been reprinted with the title *Dzogchen: Our Real Condition*)

The only thing that Rinpoche was teaching at that time and that people were practicing was the Vajrasattva purification practice, so when I got there I learned how to do that practice. From November to February 1975 we met at his home where

people would ask questions and Rinpoche would explain. At some point there was a change and the meetings took place at Ramon and Antonio's house at the Riviera di Chaia in Naples. Instead of going to Rinpoche's house we would go there on Fridays and our meetings continued as before. Then everyone asked Rinpoche if he would start to teach, and he would reply, "Next time I will start." But he never did and for three months, from November to February, he went on in this way.

Then one Friday I could not go there and later someone called and told me that Rinpoche had said he would start to teach at the next meeting, but only to those who were present that previous Friday when I was not. On Friday I went there with a friend of mine and when I arrived someone told me that I could not stay because Rinpoche had said only people who were here at the last meeting could attend. Of course, I did not move a millimeter from my place until Rinpoche said, "Ok, we'll start with



The Master's house at "la Gaiola" seen from the sea, from the bay of Trentico in Posillipo. Historically the area of Gaiola was a place of *otium* [withdrawing from one's daily business to engage in artistic or philosophical activities] for the ancient Romans. Many former politicians or soldiers, after having lived in Rome or toured the Empire, chose this paradise to retire to private life, having their villas built between Posillipo and Miseno. The ancient Greek name, Pausilypon, meant "respite from worry".



Another garden with Roman ruins where the Master, his family and friends often used to relax and have picnics. He often liked to rest on a hammock attached to two pines in the garden.

the people who are here." He started with a Vajrasattva empowerment and something happened, a vase fell down and there were some signs. That meeting was held at Ramon's house and from that time on we would meet at the Palestra Palasciano. This gym was the place I had met Rinpoche the first time when he was giving a lecture on Bon in January of 1975 and it was the place where Rinpoche had taught Yantra

Yoga from 1975 onwards. Prior to that he had taught at the Palazzetto dello Sport, an enormous building with many gyms.

M: Was this in 1975 or 1976?

AC: It was in February 1976 when he gave the first complete cycle of Dzogchen Teachings. From February until June 1976 every Friday he gave Dzogchen Upadesha teaching including outer and inner *rushen, treg-*

chöd, bardo, tummo, phowa and many others. There were about twelve of us, and also a dog, in a small room in an old Neapolitan building with gym equipment. We received this complete teaching and in June Rinpoche said, "Now we have to go and apply something with practice, and we should go with a tent somewhere on a mountain to have some real experience of the practice."

In the meantime, since the previous year, Rinpoche had been in contact with Laura Albini in Rome who was a reference point for the Karma Kagyu Center there, a center for the Karmapa and Kalu Rinpoche. They had repeatedly asked Rinpoche to teach but he had always refused. Rinpoche had once or twice gone to Rome to meet Laura and at one point decided to start giving teaching to some of the Karma Kagyu people from Rome, from Milan, like Giuliano Casiraghi and Aldo Oneto, and also from Sardinia who were more Gelugpa oriented, like Mariano and Anna Dessole. Laura Albini organized everything to do a retreat in Subiaco. That was in 1976. The Subiaco retreat went on for a long time. A group of five of us from Naples went there for only three days because Rinpoche was giving a *Rigpai Tsalwang* and had told us we should come for those three days. There was Ciro Marolda, Antonio Morgione, Eugenio Amico, Enzo Desio, and myself.

When I went to Subiaco I was a little puzzled by the impression I had from

» continued on the following page

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these Buddhist practitioners, because the way that Rinpoche had taught us in Naples was completely beyond any traditional framework. He was direct and did not use any invocations or prayers, or a single word of Tibetan. He taught experience through practice and we didn't do any Guruyoga formal practice, nothing at all. When I was in Subiaco and saw all the people chanting mantras and using malas I thought what is going on here? In fact, I met Rinpoche on the stairs and I said, "Maestro" – we used to call Rinpoche Maestro – "Why is this different, why all these things?" He told me that the circumstances were different, something like that. And then I thought, maybe these people need this, but this is not how it should really be. But of course I was not right in my understanding. When Rinpoche taught the first time it is interesting to see and understand also seeing how Yeshi teaches now, how he is with people, there is something, there is a connection.

After the Subiaco retreat Rinpoche came back to Naples and in 1976 Giacommella Orfino and I and several others enrolled at the University of Naples to study Tibetan. Until that time Rinpoche had never had enough students at the university, and he was not happy about that, because other professors did not consider him academic enough. At that time he was happy because we were a group of students who were also following his teaching. So from three or four people who were studying with him at the University in the seventies, the group grew to about 20 people. We would spend a lot of time together with Rinpoche, especially a small group of us, and after lessons we would go to his house and he would cook for us. It was one of the best periods of my life.

In October 1976 his dharma activities continued with classes of yoga and others on medicine and astrology. At the end of 1976 a small group from Sardinia, some of whom had attended the Subiaco retreat, invited Rinpoche to give teachings at Costa Paradiso at the end of 1976 into 1977. I didn't go there. Then from February to June 1977, we had three classes a week: on Monday he would teach Yantra Yoga, on Thursday *kumbhaka* and *tsalung*, and on Friday Dzogchen Teaching. The Dzogchen teaching was more or less the same as the year before, with *upadesha*, *rushen* and other practices like before. The Monday Yantra Yoga classes were the only full Yantra Yoga course I took with him. He would teach in a particular way. First we

would do warm-ups and then the nine purification breathings, followed by rhythmic breathing before everything else, and then we would do the eight movements and different yantras, and at the end he would do special pranayamas or things such as *nauli* (massage of the internal belly organs). He was very skilled and could do everything such as jump into lotus position. Some-

nia where Rinpoche gave for the first (and last) time in his life the *trilung* of a whole tantra, the *Kunjed Gyalpo*, which is a large tantra, and also many amazing teachings. That was a really special retreat. At each retreat we were more and more people.

In 1978 Rinpoche continued to teach at the university and in the same year went with Andrea Dell' Angelo, Mario Maglietti



Celebrating Gino Vitiello's graduation in medicine at the Palasciano gym.

times his son Yeshi would come, and he and Yeshi had the same color tracksuit in red. Yeshi was like a miniature of the Master.

In July of 1977 we had what I considered as the real start of the Dzogchen Community: all the groups united in a retreat in Prata, a small place near Avellino, on the hillside, where Rinpoche owned a piece of land. All the people from Rome who had attended the retreat in Subiaco were there. Many of them were already following Rinpoche's courses at the university, like Enrico and Andrea Dell'Angelo. The retreat in Prata was like the merging of all of Rinpoche's students, so there were 50 to 60 people, which was a lot for us at that time. There were also Barry and Nancy Simmons, Fabio Andrico and Tiziana Gottardi.

Right after that Rinpoche went to teach in Austria where he met Andrea Leick who was organizing the teaching courses and gradually the Dzogchen Community became larger and larger as Rinpoche started to go abroad.

In 1977 at Christmas time, we had this wonderful retreat at Lu Cumitoni in Sar-

and some other students to shoot the Arura movie on Tibetan Medicine for the RAI in India and Nepal. After that we had a retreat in Campomolino, which is in the Italian Alps.

In April and May of 1979 Rinpoche was seriously ill with an ulcer and after that a group of practitioners did a retreat in the mountains of Formia.

M: Did Rinpoche stop teaching for some time when he was ill?

AC: Rinpoche was ill between April and May of 1979, but he resumed teaching that year when he recovered. At that time he was still teaching at the university so he mainly gave teachings at the holidays, Christmas, Easter and the summer, so he didn't really stop teaching. And so it went on like this renting places where we could hold retreats until we started to think we should find some land. Then in 1982, some of Rinpoche's students started to search for some land until they finally found this place, Merigar.

M: Thank you very much Adriano. ©

The Presence of the Perfect Master

Antonio Morgione

Camprodon, October 3, 2020

I had the immense fortune to meet the Precious Jewel, the King of Dharma Namkhai Norbu towards the end of 1972 when he and his family had very recently started living in Naples, in a beautiful place called Posillipo, in a villa overlooking the sea in the Baia di Trentaremi. Currently this area is the Pausilypon Archaeological Site and has been the subject of great archaeological discoveries and is profoundly different from how it was in the seventies. Back then the house was a beautiful Pompeian red with a magnificent portico with columns that flanked the entrance to the house and everything was surrounded by greenery. At the entrance there were flowerbeds with roses personally cared for by the Master and his wife.

I was an ordinary person among many, lived in a typical alley in Naples and had never left my neighborhood or my city. I had no idea that a country called Tibet could exist in the world. But I was fascinated by yoga, which I only knew from the covers of the books I saw in the windows of the bookstores in Via Foria near the National Museum.

I had many unsolved questions and none of the people I knew ever had the answers that would satisfy me.

I attended, without enthusiasm, the faculty of architecture and there I met a student of the Maestro who was at that time teaching yoga at the sports hall in Naples. That kind person told me that his Master was a yogi, a prince who came from Tibet and lived in Rome, then in Torre del Greco and then in Posillipo.

It was not easy for me to get to know the Maestro up close because I did not have the opportunity to enroll in the courses at the gym. I made friends with this person who was a student of the Maestro and as soon as I learned that he was also meeting him at his home in Posillipo, I asked him to ask the Master's permission to go and visit him at home. I was told that I could go one afternoon with my friend. Great happiness!

It wasn't easy to get to the house inside the park. From Posillipo you had to go down a narrow road and then climb over the entrance gate trying to avoid the



Antonio with his wife Nuria Prats and the Maestro.

guardian, who was not a very nice person, and his dogs! Then you had to go along a stretch of dirt road through the countryside until you could see the little red house where the Maestro and his family lived.

The Master sat on a sofa at the entrance to the house with his wife. His youngest daughter was sleeping in a crib and his son was able to crawl. His friend greeted him. To me he said, "Take a seat" and I stood at the entrance amazed and excited. I was in front of a real yogi, a prince with a proud and penetrating gaze but a kind person in the company of his wife who smiled at me. I always carry that moment with me!

From that day on, I often went to the Master's house and I also often went to the Oriental University Institute where he taught Tibetan and Mongolian language and literature. But I went to see him and not to study. Any conversation with him and any silence satisfied me fully, and all my whys were answered! Even in apparently mundane things the Master shone with knowledge that satisfied all doubts and uncertainties, like water that stops the boiling of a pot and calms it down!

I often sat next to him in a silence that was filled with communication. I believe silence is a form of listening. When I went to visit him at the Oriental University Institute, after a while he would always ask me if I had had breakfast and, since I never had, he would take me to the cafe and offer me a cappuccino and croissant and then tell me that in the morning we should have breakfast to start the day well.

I also used to accompany him around Naples to shop or to do different chores or to take the subway or the train. When we were in Montesanto (a popular neighbor-

hood in Naples) he always told me that the neighborhood reminded him of some parts of India. I was almost always with him and since he always asked me what I had done that day, I told him everything I did.

I often stayed at his house and sometimes babysat his two children. And above all I played with his oldest child, Yeshi, carrying him around piggyback. Yuchen was too small.

Life at home flowed serenely and the Master was always studying, writing and reading and preparing lessons for his students. Furthermore, I sensed that he had a close correspondence with his relatives and with fellow countrymen around the world after the exodus from Tibet. I often saw him absorbed in reading the letters but I did not understand their importance. He also had a bookcase in a closed doorway and inside there were many Tibetan books wrapped in colorful materials folded in a particular way. Sometimes I helped him sew these book covers and learned how to fold them to protect books that I had never seen before. I knew about Western books but not Tibetan ones.

In his free time he cooked and I was amazed by the fact that in five minutes he was able to prepare a meal for everyone and, as if by magic, everything in the kitchen was already tidy and clean. He would cook and talk to me about presence while he rummaged around for the kitchen instruments.

The following summer we often went for a swim in the bay below the house, going down the steep cliff of yellow Campanian tufo. He was a very good swimmer! On fine days we would picnic in the garden

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above the house and, after eating, rest in the hammock that he had set up between the two Neapolitan pines in the garden.

I would tell him how I had spent my day and my problems as a rebellious Neapolitan boy always looking for a job to “get by”, my head full of confusion and conflicts with my fairly traditional and fairly rigid authoritarian family. The Master would look at me and ask me questions such as: “What did you do?” I would answer him and he’d laugh a lot and I would be very happy! He often gave me advice on how to resolve my daily problems.

University professors from the various faculties often came to the house to ask the Master for explanations regarding his studies on ancient Tibet. Many asked about

fast and some neighborhood bullies came in and began being rude to him. Giving a fierce look to the bullies he said to Yeshe: you know that dad is a kungfu master. Do you remember that time he sent four big men who were very rude to the hospital? And Yeshe who immediately understood answered yes that he remembered. In a flash the tough guys disappeared from the place and were no longer seen around those parts when the Maestro passed by. The Master told the story and laughed!

Once, on a crowded underground train, a pickpocket tried to steal the Master’s wallet. He made sure to make it easy for him! As soon as he had the wallet the Master took his hand and the thief was dumbfounded and frightened but he apologized to the Master and went away amazed. Then

I asked the Master if he could teach me Tibetan and did a few lessons with him but I think I put his infinite patience and compassion to the test because I didn’t understand much and messed up a lot. Finally he told me it was better if I learned Chinese! I am not a scholar and, on the other hand, I have no literary training, I only went to art schools and I have no special skill for studying.

But sitting in silence beside the Teacher while he was driving the car I learned many things that are now a base of practice for me. And I’m not talking about driving school!

In the very early days, his cousin and sister frequently came to visit the Master. I was often there with them and listened to their conversations in Tibetan in silence and, sometimes, he also gave them Teachings in Italian. There was always an air of joy and happiness around him.

The Maestro was often invited to give talks and once I went to listen to him in a large bookshop in Naples. I remember he spoke about the difficulty of being born as a human and of a turtle emerging from the ocean and managing to find a hole in a piece of floating wood. The turtle was there and had found the hole in the wood! After the conference there was a crowd around him and his wife and I only had time to catch his eye and that was enough for me!

Then gradually many people started to come and ask for teachings from the Master and, so I remember, the public teachings and the first retreats began after his meeting with H.H. the Karmapa. Then came his plans for the Dzogchen Community to which the Master gave great importance by planning and studying how to realize it.

I have not changed since then. I have always worked and remained as I was as you can hear from my strong Neapolitan accent. But it can be said that I have found, thanks to the deep kindness and compassion of our precious Master, what always lies in our hearts.

Although over time I see myself getting older and more tired, the fresh and limitless presence of the Master is always alive in me, his eternal student among many. I am a member of the Dzogchen Community and extend many thanks to all my Vajra brothers and sisters who, together with the Master and the Teachings, have always supported me throughout my life. Many thanks to all! ©



The Master liked to bathe in the Bay of Trentaremi below the Gaiola house.

medicine, astrology, architecture, art, literature and history and the Master patiently explained everything, often introducing them to the principles of the teaching.

The Maestro often went to Rome because he had an important position at the ISMEO institute and with its founder Giuseppe Tucci. At the time, a highly educated Tibetan scholar named Sanghe also worked at the institute. He and the Master were very close friends and treated each other as brothers and were always happy and playing and joking. Since I often accompanied him, once with the Master and his family I went to Sanghe’s house in Rome and saw a room in his house all set up just like a temple. It was beautiful and beautifully decorated!

The Maestro liked playing pranks a lot. Once he was in a neighborhood bar in Bagnoli with his son Yeshe having break-

the Master commented that he had understood the whole movement of the thief and had placed himself near him on purpose and then began to laugh jokingly. I hadn’t noticed anything and yet I was next to him.

I helped Maestro to move things around and do maintenance work in the house. He knew how to do everything and always very well! I still remember a famous wardrobe that we disassembled and reassembled three times and in the end after Formia it was thrown away.

You could say that until 1975, the year in which the Master and his family moved to Bagnoli, I lived in contact with teaching and practice in a “spontaneous” way without having any specific culture or preparation of any kind. On the other hand, Dzogchen is the state whose revelation is direct and inexpressible. The presence of the perfect Master is everything!

The Red House at the Gaiola

Nicoletta Liguori

I met the Master in the spring of 1971. A friend of mine and I had joined the Budo club, a judo gym, in Naples in via Mezzocannone, near the Università Orientale, where I was studying. One evening my friend told me that the judo teacher had discovered that there was a Tibetan master in Naples who taught yoga at the Palazzetto dello sport in Fuorigrotta. She very excited and motivated and told me that she really wanted to meet him.

So of course, I immediately told her that she must be mistaken, that he must be an Indian master because I was absolutely positive that there was no Tibetan master in Naples. But in fact the day after I went to the Palazzetto dello Sport and what did I find – a Tibetan master! It was 'Norbu', and Mr. Procaccini, who was his manager, introduced me to him and after a couple of days I started yoga classes there.



The garden of the Gaiola house. The windows of the Namkhai's living room overlooked the Gulf of Posillipo.

There were already several people studying Yantra Yoga with him including a well-known Neapolitan astrologer who was the most able in doing the asanas. But the most remarkable thing about those lessons was that at the end of the Yantra Yoga sessions while many of the students would leave, a small group of three or four people

he explained. Most of the people would ask him lots of questions but I was always silent, trying to understand what he had said.

The Master shied away from promoting his own merits and it was only when I met him while he was coming down the stairs of the Orientale, in an elegant black suit, that I learned that he was a professor of Tibetan and Mongolian there.

At the time we had a close relationship with 'Norbu', as we called him then, who was living with his family in Torre del Greco. In that period his son Yeshi was a few months old. Rinpoche never used to speak much about his own situation, but when I met Roberto, my future husband, through Rinpoche, he told me that Rinpoche and his wife Rosa would be having a little girl in August. So in August we went to Rinpoche's home to hang up garlands for the new arrival and after the birth I helped Rosa with the little girl and we spent quite a lot of time at their home.

The Master's family life was based on maximum mutual collaboration. He never avoided participating in household chores and carried out most of them with competence and serenity. He helped his wife Rosa in the kitchen and looked after the children. He often delighted us with his preparations of typical Tibetan dishes, momos and tsampa and, when the ingredients were missing, the Master would solve the problem of dinner with a simple spaghetti with parsley pesto, garlic and soy sauce.

Then in the autumn, Roberto and I invited the Master and his family to come and live with us at the Gaiola, which was a wonderful Mediterranean villa that had

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Roberto Ventrella relaxing with a friend in his living room above the home of the Maestro and Rosa.

The Master was very friendly to us and treated us as equals, although he seemed quite decisive and didn't hesitate to drive us home in his bright red Fiat 850 Spider convertible if we needed a ride and if he was going our way.

would remain and the Master would give teachings to them. For me this was absolutely extraordinary because he would speak about Dzogchen teaching. I had no idea that beyond this physical form of yoga there was something to learn that would work at the level of body, voice and mind, as

The Master and Nicoletta

The Story of One of the First Yantra Yoga Practitioners

Nicoletta Liguori

Translated by Alessandra Policreti

Originally published in the Merigar Letter magazine, December 2011.

The Master Norbu wore a red tracksuit, he was strong and slim, his oriental eyes were piercing and alive. He assisted those who had difficulties in performing the yoga exercises and often his mouth opened with an encouraging smile. With an imperceptible but effective pressure, his hands lightly touched the students' bodies in the places where he meant to correct them.

I was particularly attracted by the Master's feet. Though small, they seemed to be firmly placed, as if stuck to the ground, when he performed the asanas on one foot only, you couldn't notice even the slightest oscillation. The sense of stability and lightness marked his movements.

The first indication given by the Master was to exhale in the phases of contraction, closure of the body and to inhale during the expansion. Yantra yoga, he explained, is made up of the combination of move-



ment and breathing, therefore each gesture has to be accompanied by a precise phase of breathing. He said that 'inhaling' is a natural and spontaneous function, but 'exhaling' is not as spontaneous and he explained that this action, especially here in the Western world, has become a forgotten practice. We inhale and we hold the breath without exhaling.

Our breath remains in the upper part of our lungs, creating a toxic surface in our lungs and in the other organs because of the failure to dispose of the waste sub-

stances. A correct breathing can provide oxygen to wide areas of the body, sweep up the residue of carbon dioxide and other toxic substances and, through a thorough exhalation, carry out all the waste.

The Master was extremely kind, he had infinite patience, he told us that there was nothing to worry about if we could not sit in the lotus position but only with crossed legs and for this reason he explained one by one the positions we could sit in without effort, according to our possibility. Then he went on to explain the nine breathings,

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been built over a Roman villa and previous to that a Greek one. It was also the house where Oscar Wilde used to stay when he was in Naples. In that period there were also lots of young people coming and going at the Gaiola.

The "red house", as we had baptized the villa at the Gaiola, turned out to be a special and ideal place to raise children and meditate. In fact, the Master discovered ravines, caves and unique places that none of us had noticed. Sometimes he would tell us about his dreams that brought back to him ancestral teachings and memories of his life in Tibet. He told us about the travels of a tea expedition led by his elder sister, and how he managed on more than one occasion to thwart attacks from bandits with the help of the simple sound of a bell and by evoking the protective Guardians of the teaching. We were almost never alone with

our families with people constantly arriving from everywhere. Some young people moved into our house, like Claudio, while others, like Antonio, visited the house almost every day.

Once a week Norbu gave us teachings in the huge hall of the villa and we would all gather to listen with respect to his words of wisdom. The Master's sister, Janzon, who lived in Switzerland with her husband, paid a very welcome visit to the villa and there was a joyful period when his cousins Sonan and Kundè visited. The presence of Norbu at the Gaiola also attracted the curiosity and interest of illustrious personalities, artists, poets, and musicians. One of these special guests was Paul Buckmaster, a young musician and arranger for many Anglo-Saxon and Italian artists, who, one evening, was struck hearing the sound of the songs of a practice that Norbu and his cousins were performing. Paul, excited about it, confided

to me that he had never heard sublime music like that and set out to record part of it.

The birth of my son Asad was a much awaited event in the family especially by Yeshi and little Yuchen, who, enthusiastic, immediately called him Pupito as soon as she saw him.

But in 1973 something special happened. The owner of the Gaiola asked us to leave the house. If we had wanted to buy it we could have continued to live there but we didn't want to do that even though the Master had pointed out many wonderful places in the garden around that house that were really suitable for practicing, such as a patio containing an ancient Greek column from the fourth century BC that overlooked a large Greek theater from the same historical period and a terrace overlooking the sea in view of the island of Capri.

The Master didn't lose any time and as soon as he knew we had to leave the house,



which should precede any practice of Yantra Yoga and later on also any other practice. A necessary condition in order to perform the nine breathings was to sit in a position with the back controlled but not stiff, the thumbs and ring fingers exerting a light pressure on the sides of the knees, the tongue resting on the palate, eyes half closed and directed towards the tip of the nose, the chin slightly bent and tucked back, the shoulders lowered.

The Master expressed himself in a peculiar Italian, but the concepts were very

clear and opened up a boundless world of knowledge. For the first time in my young life I became aware of the breathing and of the infinite potentialities that this awareness allowed me to develop, of my body, of how much attention we should give it, and of the mind's infinite potentialities.

The Master gave us the impression that he was speaking to each one of us and he addressed each one of us as a unique individual, rather than a group of people.

he did so. His sister was there at the time and she helped Rinpoche and Rosa with the moving.

Rinpoche and his family found temporary accommodation in a house on the outskirts of Naples, in Bagnoli, and later moved to a particular house in Pozzuoli also located on the slopes of the Solfatara volcanic crater. That place became the destination of all of Master Norbu's disciples for many years.

Roberto and I managed to put off moving for a few months and when we did we went back to live in the centre of Naples for a few months and immediately after we started to put into action a plan that we had decided on the year before to leave Naples and get a house in the countryside with some land. And that is what we did.

For months and months, we went looking through all the surrounding countryside until we found this beautiful piece of

land in Prata with a stone house. The Master found another piece of land adjoining this with a small house. We got this house but it wasn't habitable so first of all we had to restructure it. At the time there was no electricity, no water and no road to get there. It was really a wild place and we had to bring water from a well a little way off. The house in Prata was very important for the simple reason that we did the first international retreat of the Dzogchen Community there.

The Community had already been formed in 1976 with the first statute. The first meeting we had was at Nuria and Antonio Morgione's house. We were 12 people and put down in writing the basics of the Dzogchen Community.

In the same year the first retreat was held in Subiaco. It was a small retreat with a few people, mostly Italians. Afterwards, the Master suggested doing a retreat in

I felt the strong authority radiating from him. In his presence I felt a sense of peace and at the same time an eagerness to learn this absolute and yet undefined knowledge.

Lesson time seemed to pass incredibly slowly, and yet I had the feeling that it was never long enough, and neither of the two sensations dominated the other.

The asanas we were yearning to learn were only studied at the end of the lesson and they didn't seem to be so relevant within the whole yantra yoga system. The yantra course I had the privilege to follow in those years was attended by students who had achieved a considerable skill in performing the most difficult exercises. One of them was called Ciro and he found it easy to perform the most advanced positions.

I had come to know about the Master Norbu in a peculiar way. One evening two friends of mine who went to the same judo school I attended and who shared my same apartment came home with a mystical vibe, saying they had found out about the presence of a Tibetan Master in Naples. Driven by a legitimate curiosity but with a little bit of scepticism I immediately went to meet the Tibetan Master they spoke of. And so I saw Norbu for the first time, a young Tibetan with the red tracksuit and a big benevolent smile. At the exact moment I set my eyes on Norbu, in my heart I chose him as my Master and I was certain that

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Prata, which was the first 'official' retreat with 60–70 people from all over the world. It took place for three weeks in July and August in 1977. At the beginning of the teachings Rinpoche told us that although Tibetan teachers traditionally sit on high thrones to teach, he would sit in the middle of us so that there would be no distinction between us.

What the Master taught in Prata was the fundamental lesson of our existence in which he generously gave teaching without reserve or limits, making us feel part of a community of Vajra brothers and sisters. He taught us to consider ourselves each the mirror of the other, to not enter into judgment, and to pursue the common good without distinction and practice overcoming our passions and finally becoming free. ©

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through him I would give form to what I had always longed for.

For years before meeting him I had been interested in the occult sciences, magic and yoga and everything that could help me discover dimensions that normally escape ordinary perception. Looking back after so many years I ask myself what was the impulse which led a simple nineteen year old girl to look, without the slightest awareness, for something that would allow her to know her real essence. This fortunate meeting with the Master projected me into a mood which I could define as mystical-positivist. I felt ancestral memories of my being come to surface like springs pressed into an iron crate. I felt that my quest, far from being understood fully in its ultimate meaning, had arrived almost without effort to its source.

During one of the yantra lessons I took part in a funny game, almost an illusionism. One of the students had asked the Master if it would be possible to lift a body with two fingers and leave it in mid-air. The Master, half serious and half amused, answered that we could try and asked me to be the model. I had no doubts and I accepted to take part in the experiment without hesitating, seeing as I had absolute faith in the Master. He gave me a few instructions about how I should behave during the experiment. I had to close my fists at the sides of my body, align my feet and stay in a position that was controlled but not stiff. The Master joined his indexes and thumbs and placed them under my shoulders while a student did the same thing with my feet. With only four fingers holding me, I found myself in mid-air almost without realizing it. The Master made a gesture and the fingers became only four, then... none. I remained suspended for a few long seconds in total absence of weight and thoughts. I learned what it means to be in the clouds. When I regained contact with the floor, everyone was smiling incredulous and amused.

The Master Norbu taught us that yantra yoga not only contributes in keeping the body in shape, but it is effective towards one's realization as had been the case for a great Yogi: his uncle Togden. Every morning at dawn Norbu's uncle practiced the whole Yantra Yoga *thun* completely naked in the open air, in any weather.

The Master emphasized first of all the importance of mindful breathing. He gave great importance to breathing, because of



its fundamental function in our lives but also because of its power in channeling our energy towards total realization. The nine purification breathings, the eight movements, the rhythmic breathing, are essential practices for achieving a condition of balance of body, energy and mind.

The lesson I learned faster than any other was that of achieving the full freedom I needed and of becoming aware.

The discipline the Master taught us was functional to the achievement of a basic level of knowledge of Yantra Yoga, but it had to be totally devoid of any effort. The principle was based on the need not to bend one's will for the execution of yoga practices in a forced way, and this principle became a code of behavior which I tried to apply in any circumstance of life.

The Master said that if we freed our minds from the reservations and constrictions which interfere with the spontaneity of our actions, we would obtain the understanding of the teachings much more quickly and effectively. Norbu said that our realization was hindered by a number of conditionings due to our culture and everything we had learned until that moment. Yantra Yoga could help us in the process of freeing ourselves from the ties of the complications imposed by such a pervading society. By freeing the body and the mind from the bonds veiling ordinary vision, we can finally enter into the real sense of our existence.

The class following those Yantra Yoga lessons in 1971 was made up of diverse and often peculiar characters. The Master certainly didn't ask his disciples what their social class or level of education was, therefore a nurse, a physiotherapist, a pharmaceutical representative, some university students, metalworkers, doctors, engineers, council employees and artists crowded the Yantra lessons.

The peculiarity of that unprecedented event consisted in the fact that everyone could, by using mere attention, understand the high teachings the Master gave after the end of the lesson. Not all students stayed behind, in fact only three or four of us spontaneously sat on the tatami around Norbu to listen carefully to the teachings of an old lineage: Dzogchen. I soon learned that the teaching our Master was generously revealing to a few students after Yantra Yoga was so precious and secret that it had to be guarded with the same care one would have for an extremely precious jewel. ©

Black and white photos courtesy of Nicoletta Liguori

Merigar September 2018

Our Master's Presence is with us
beyond the end of Time

Judith Pickering
Australia

When we heard that we had not much more time with our master on this earth in this particular human form, I resolved to fly to Merigar to be with him and with the community in these final days. It felt vital to make a strong personal connection with the world-wide Sangha, that is, our Vajra Kin, across the globe as well as with my beloved master of all times. I had never been to another Gar outside Australia.

Tuesday 25th September 2018

I arrived in Pisa early morning on Tuesday 25th September, the day after Rinpoche had arrived back in Merigar after being in hospital in Siena. I shared a car and lodging with a lovely woman from England; an angel! We went straight to the Gönpa: a time of continuous collective practice, all of us in the same state, spilling out onto the rocks and gardens, silence enveloping us in deep peace and serenity, as we are all part of the one state of being, yet flowing, interconnected.

My angel friend and I stayed at an old farm in a wood of chestnuts, run by Nicoletta with her mother's warm heart who said how she knew Adriano Clemente since he was very young and other members of the Community very well.

We practiced all day and all night yet surrounded with a gentleness of spirit, deep, deep peace and quietude. Three days of practice while Rinpoche was in final Samadhi. Watching them prepare the Great Stupa where his body would be laid to rest, the power, the poignancy, the deep peace as if his Wisdom mind was in some mysterious way enveloping us all in his embrace all of us one sangha in the same state.



Thursday September 27 2018

At 9.10 pm on Thursday September 27th our beloved master entered *Tugdum*, the state of samadhi where his presence is still residing in the body, deep in contemplation, a time in which miracles occur.

Monday October 1st 2018

We were all invited to come before dawn to pay our last respects to Rinpoche in Samadhi.

Early in the morning, long before dawn, we get up in silence. We drive through the narrow roads of villages and up hills and round corners shivering in the cold of pre-dawn. We silently gather at the top of the hill. I feel both one with this community and terribly alone. We wait, a long time, as people go in small groups walking down in single file. A gentle man I'd met but a day before, happens to fall in line behind me. I am grateful for such a *compañeros*.

The poignancy of something so personal and intimate, yet so collective and universal, huddling together in silence in the cold grey light. Day dawns illuminating hundreds of sangha silently taking refuge, praying, practicing, purifying, incarnating and realizing all that we have been taught, all so overwhelmed by profound gratitude for all we have been given, the extraordinary vast treasures of teachings imparted over aeons.

The poignancy of watching little groups set out on the journey down the hill to

see our master, each given a flower, long stemmed white roses, red roses, daisies, all manner of flowers. A fifteen minute walk symbolizing the pilgrimage of life, the path towards enlightenment, a journey to pay homage to One where there is no finality, no death, just transmutation into pure primordial being, eternal presence.

It is a day when reality is charged with Reality, every moment is pregnant with pure being, every blade of grass, every pebble under foot, the atmosphere, the light, the trees, the sense of community, of solitude and togetherness.

Crying yet feeling strangely at peace and utterly blessed as if our precious one, our Rinpoche's wisdom mind is radiating out, enveloping us all in perfect all-encompassing compassion, love, ultimate Bodhicitta, we are all part of his mind and we are walking down the path of his being, as if his primordial Dharmakaya state is eternity and universal and we are simply walking down the path to the centre of our own being.

The walk itself felt utterly blessed, each of us carrying a different flower, down the road lined with pebbles, the soft crunch as we walk in meditation chanting the Vajrasattva mantra, the soft light of dawn enveloping us in peace past the stupa which would be Rinpoche's final resting place, down through forest, round corners. Some

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hurried and over-took me, another was walking in such slow silent mindful meditation and I fell into the rhythm of her footsteps as well as the rhythm of reciting the 100 syllable mantra of Vajrasattva, coordinating with the breath and body of movement. and those behind also fell into step. I did not turn to see who was following but knew other sangha were behind me and felt solidarity and comfort in this. The gentle compañeros was right behind me and I felt great comfort having someone I knew falling into step with my steps. We walk down this hill and we walk and we walk, each nanosecond a precious moment of pure oneness, through beautiful forests of juniper, past rose hips, silently reciting the Vajrasattva mantra, co-ordinating our footsteps with one another and with our breathing and with the mantra, our little pilgrimage to Rinpoche's house.

My compañeros didn't see the tears streaming down my face but I felt his moral support and comfort. The presence of our support and kindness for each other, the sense that we must look after each other more than ever in the times to come.

We rounded the bend and could then see Rinpoche's house and a huge arch of disciples in single file walking past his bedroom. At this moment I felt the grief of witnessing everyone's silent grief, my heart going out to all, the utter pathos of this.

Every blade of grass seemed distinct and palpably alive, vibrant, the sky was shimmering but full of clouds, moving and dispersing. A quince tree had shed its fruit, golden balls of light upon the ground. I thought how much I would like to take a fallen fruit. Attachment! remember the gold, leave the fruit. Beyond the garden a field merging into the countryside of mountain heath, sheep, forest, clouds...

We arrive at the garden outside Rinpoche's house and there are slow lines of people, slowly processing with their flowers.

I stand waiting, tears streaming down my face, with my long-stemmed rose. My vajra friend who is behind me turns to me and touches his white rose to my red rose, as if two lamas touching foreheads, acknowledgement he is with me in spirit, there beside me, we are in this together. As if just to acknowledge solidarity, in this moment that is both so intimate yet so private, so personal, so solitary, so interdependent, all these things at the same time

The garden was full of those who had seen him and were meditating.



And then our little group was circling round to reach the house and approach the bedroom. A strange sense of stillness, dignity, clarity, peace, tranquillity. Behind me I heard my friend break down in grief and my heart went out to him but I dared not turn as I was concerned any noise might disturb the samadhi of Rinpoche. I watched Thupten Rabgyi guides us in pairs to stand in the window shrouded in Kata cloths of blessings paid homage.

Rinpoche was draped in the silk scarves of the five elements. His face was radiating peace and presence. This was not a body where the spirit had already departed but Rinpoche in samadhi, radiating peace, pure presence, the nature of mind, utter realisation so utterly real and profoundly present that to gaze on that face was to gaze on the face of primordial purity, primordial wisdom, nyat, pure presence, and to enter that state of contemplation. Bowing, offering the flower, paying respects.

And I heard a voice of Rinpoche telling me to look after each other, to look after all. We are all on the same boat, vajra brothers and sisters and his wisdom mind is in us.

Afterwards I went to meditate in the field which overlooked the valley. To be in nature, to gaze on the sky with its spectacular light show of moving cloud formations, the sheep on the hill, mist clearing to reveal forest, gorse, heather, sheep on the hill... silence, movement, stillness, deep peace.

This day feels more Real than real, every blade of grass is shimmering with dew catching the light of dawn, trees rustling in the breeze, clouded sky threatening lightning and thunder, clouds parting to reveal

glimpses of dharmak ya blue sky beyond. Everything is simply so alive, as if I had woken up to a new day of freshness without obscuration of cloudy thoughts and emotions, as if a veil had been removed, as if someone had taken away cataracts and I could see clearly without hinderance and obscuration clouding my vision.

There was only a handful of people left now. We wandered slowly up the hill through forest then clearing and went to the stupa where by now all our flower offerings had been placed. I circumambulated the stupa three times then went up the hill...

And we walk so slowly up the hill again through forest then the clearing where the stupa is. The stupa which is empty but where our beloved master's Khugong, his precious corpse, will be placed. To feel his presence for all time. He is present, he is with us, he as present as he ever has been, he is not someone who has departed and I am filled with a strange unexpected sense of joy and utter gratitude. We have been given every single dharma treasure, every single teaching, everything we could possibly ever need for our enlightenment.

We have been so blest, so utterly blest, so, so blest.

And now I end this by saying thank you and promising to do what I can to be kind to others, to help, to heal, to console, to encourage, and to do all I can to try to realize the teachings in the next stage of my life. So fortunate, Mangalam, to have these precious dharma treasures entrusted to us. To live every day now as if it is the first day of this new life.

This is the day where something has really begun. And I think 'this is the first day of the rest of my life' for my life has turned a corner and a new sense of renunciation, of resolve to let go of all that is not the path, of determination to walk the path in fidelity, a new day, a bright day, as Rinpoche is strangely more alive than ever, dharmak ya alive ...

With great luck it might be I have another thirty years to practice and try to realise all that has been imparted. To try to realise all the profound teachings. I feel like one after confession, a completely blank slate, the Vajrasattva mantras have done their work completely pure, pure pure pure.

I sit in the garden continuing the practice of Vajrasattva, Guru Yoga, the Song of Vajra. Gazing into the sky and it seems it has never been so astounding, not clear like Dharmak ya sky, full of clouds, but

Artists in the Dzogchen Community

The Space in Between a Cloud and a Sound

Silvia Nakkach

If I tell my story from the present time, I sometimes wonder if I am a musician or a sound artist. I feel more like a sculptor that shapes sound molding time in space. It makes sense, my last name Nakkach means artisan, and if I separate the N-from the akkach, it sounds like akash, meaning 'clear space', 'sky' in Indian Cosmology.

Since I was seven years old, I've written music as a poet, chasing metaphors in search of the shifting microtonality between one note and the space which allows for that note to meet another note...and hopefully, a listener. As a vocalist, I prefer not to dwell in front or in the center of the music, but rather be present as a nomadic listener, wandering through landscapes of abstract sound. In music, space is a temptation. The tendency is to occupy it. I believe



the function of music is to quiet the mind to make it sensitive to divine intervention, and as a composer I admire the Japanese minimalistic aesthetics of, "don't bother me colors". Less is more powerful because has more space.

Music has always been my private sanctuary – never confined to one culture or form, but instead making me a world traveler from an early age in search of the unheard sound. I treat the music itself as a traveler. The idea of staying in one genre is yet another temptation, but in each of my albums, I explore new territories. My agreement with music has never changed: by making music, I grow divine, and in exchange, I experience the transcendent and invite others to share the journey: Who is Singing? My voice enters in a trance-like state similar to guruyoga in which the singer feels she is being sung, a state both detached and warmly devotional. I used to call it the healing voice. The album that better describes this experience is entitled AH, release in 1998.

I grew up in a multi-cultural family, mostly French and Lebanese, *with a twist of Italian humor*.

I was born in South America, my papa was a giver and a true Sufi, and my mama was a virtuoso couturier that collected roy-

» continued on the following page

clouds moving, and swirling and parting to reveal the bright blue sky behind and the sun peeks through bathing the verdant green landscape in golden light, the mist rolls upon the hills where sheep are grazing, and it feels like we are sitting at the beginning of time

And here we are all together in one state of contemplation, united all doing our internal practice, but in one state. I sit there a long time; this part of the garden has so few there is no need to leave.

Eventually I know it is time to get up and go so I go and sit for a moment in the garden closer to the house where there is another gathering of other people. And I sit and I pray ...

I notice people are going up behind the house and I take my courage and I go up there where people are standing above the room, we can't see in but we know he is there.

And then we are told it is time to go. And we walk so slowly up the hill again through forest then the clearing where the stupa is. The stupa which is empty but where our beloved master's Khugong, his

precious corpse, will be placed. To feel his presence for all time. He is present, he is with us, he as present as he ever has been, he is not someone who has departed and I am filled with a strange unexpected sense of joy and utter gratitude. We have been given every single dharma treasure, every single teaching, everything we could possibly ever need for our enlightenment.

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Quoting Costantino Albini's testimonial given at the ceremony at the Great Stupa, Merigar, October 3, 2018:

Now, Master, we, your students, are thousands and are all over the earth. Today there are many of us and we are here to pay homage to you but this is not a farewell, it is not a goodbye. You, Master, live in the heart of each one of us. Thanks to your compassion we are now your Body that continues to live.

Let us continue the journey together, to bring your vision to fulfillment.

We will carry your projects, your ideas, your endeavours forward and we will evolve in every corner of the planet.

We will be with you again and again, for many lives to come, until Supreme Realization.

This is your promise.

This is and will be our life.

Master, Rinpoche, thank you.

Costantino Albini

With heart-felt, total, utter gratitude to our master, our precious jewel, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, the pearl of great price, and to all the sangha. ©



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al-like hats. I didn't spend too much time with them, but I was there to help them to die peacefully. I loved science and had a lab in the guest's bathroom that later became my photography black-room. A huge grand piano was my home inside my home. All my sisters and brothers were much older than me. So, I became my own listening culture, playing guitar and Indian tablas while learning classical music. I wrote songs, operas, boleros, and later, electronic music, highly influenced by *Punctualism*, a style in the 20th-century composition which is based not on a linear sequence of notes but on their isolation from one another avoiding traditional melodic lines. I graduated from the music conservatory, became a composer, performer, and trained clinical psychotherapist in the midst of military coups and civil wars. I introduced music to my patients and became one of few music psychotherapists. My practice grew, informed by Freud, Lacan, Mahler, Oliver Messiaen, Gismonti, Joao Gilbert's bossa-nova, and always indigenous poetry.

I never stopped traveling, studying, and working while traveling. As a teenager, I spent 9 months in India practicing Hatha Yoga and Indian music. I became a young yogini, and my music practice was deeply influenced by the revelatory science of Nada Yoga – the path of sound being one with the vibration of consciousness, and consciousness becoming a virtuoso listener. In 1982, it was very dangerous for an avant-garde young artist like me with big hair to live in Argentina or Brazil. This was my call for a serious re-incarnation. I married my first husband and the next day we exiled to New York City and soon after to the Bay Area, in sunny California. I start-

ed working for and collaborating with the legendary maestro Claudio Naranjo, who mentored the integration of my music with psycho-spirituality and the dharma. In the same month, I magically run into Pauline Oliveros, who for the next 30 years mentored my capacity as a deep listener and composing as a meditation. Again, in the same month, I met my grand music guru, the late maestro Ali Akbar Khan, who became my Baba (music-father). It was then, when I surrendered to the irresistible mystery of the ragas of India, the Goddess Saraswati became my shakti family, the source, and path of my exceedingly Hindu-



stani music life.

The Voice without Me

Immersed inside the life of the ragas, everything musical in me changed, and the medium of my imagination became The Voice. I diligently devoted my time to exploring the voice as a sound instrument in all its infinite potential to heal, express, and re-enchant this world beyond humans and beyond even music. I had to write books to share this yogic mindset on the Voice without The Singer.

Soon after, I founded the Vox Mundi School of the Voice devoted to education and the preservation of unusual vocal arts, from Mahler songs to the Peruvian Icaros. I designed my school signature program, the Yoga of the Voice – an evolving deep listening practice that has mentored hundreds of students everywhere across the world. The teachings focus on freeing the Voices of the Voice and nurturing artistic expression as a whole. I listen to the teacher in me saying all the time to my students pay attention to Sound. Let it Be! The point being to de-personalize their experience of singing, and to embody the voice as an



energy that can be liberating and transformative. The Dzogchen experience became the ground of my creative imagination.

Demystifying the experience of singing, the Vox Mundi teachings aim to enhance the sensibility of the subtle through the nuances of the voice. Singing is inherently joyful (*sukha*), is a natural activity, and *the music of the voice can be like flying* – freeing us from prior conditioning, ego weight,



karmic traces, or anything that tightens us. When we listen to ancient cultures of chant, the indigenous voices, mantras, or shamanic traditions – we begin to understand that what we refer as *the voice* is a fabric of breath and muscles that manifest through the etheric architecture of *prana*, moving freely through the body and into expressions of inspired sound...tone magic...melody...*maybe music*.

Recently, by the grace of continuity of presence and my vow to the *guru–shishya parampara* tradition (guru-disciple bond), *the Voice was revealed to me as the Mirror*. I realized that the voice is a metaphor, and like the mind, we don't see it. Then we project thoughts and emotions upon it that the voice reflects and expresses. I have been writing about the *Voice and the Mirror* and mentoring my students to approach their voices with the open clarity of a mirror that reflects but is always empty and free of judgments, with the capacity to *transform emotions in devotion*. In this way, singing can be experienced as prayer, or as abstract art: non-conceptual, impersonal, and like mantra, can be activated.

Integration

In 1986, I met Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche and spent many summers and winters in retreat with him. I invited him to teach in Brazil, and in the Brazilian mountains Rinpoche found the fertile land he was longing for. He lived there till his last breath. The last time I saw him he told me to share the dharma through my music. And it was when I met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in 1992, that it all came together for me. His Italian warmth and musicality, the immediate sangha friends, traveling together around the planet, dancing the vajra dance

under the full moon, visionary cloud gazing while floating in the ocean, the fearless mantra transmissions, fantastic Ganapujas, Rinpoche deep melodious voice. These illuminating frequencies have permeated all aspects of my life and work, and Guruyoga became the state of mind that has saved me from errors of all kinds.

Meeting Chögyal Namkhai Norbu strengthened my conviction, my capacity to integrate, and consolidated my life as a nomadic sound yogini who always works while traveling. Amazingly, I was in the presence of Rinpoche while in my honey-moon in Merigar, when my father passed away, when my two brothers died tragically, and when my divine cellist husband suddenly stopped breathing without saying goodbye. Rinpoche was like a rock and said, "*it's samsara*".

It was when my husband died that my refuge in the dharma, the sangha, and the *sound as the practice* fired up. I start traveling even more extensively and became like an obsessional artist in search of the perfect *laya* – the duration of the silence in between notes, beyond tempo, a *s-pace* where sound pauses, like a *phantom breath*. Since then, I am diving into the epic beauty of Dhrupad chanting, the most sophisticated vocal art form I've ever tried to master, under the gentle direction of my new Guru'ji, Pandit Uday Bhawalkar.

By remembering the devotional nature of music, we open our hearts to the deep longing of the chant and become familiar with "the enchanters," those who journey through the magic of the sound to attract the spirit power.

In Between a Cloud and a Sound

Being on university faculty and holding other academic positions has allowed me to keep my musician-self separated from the basic "income" system. Thus, I can flip the script and create music as a Saraswati offering. In 2015, when they called to announce my Grammy's nomination – without me even sending the album, I rejoiced, I cried, I screamed, and I relax! It was such a huge highlight in a time of deep personal reconstruction. Someone that I don't know is listening! So.. I keep going and never, never give up! My Indian given name is Saraswati Devi, 'she who flows'. I have hopes to dedicate time and resources to help children from Central America, Tibet, and Syria in need for freedom and to be reunited with their families.

Reinforced by Rinpoche teachings, listening to the birds and clouds gazing are practices that remain the source of my creative imagination and the *secret sound*. The fascination I have with the melodiousness in the movement of the clouds, rainbows, moonlights, and the shifting sound of the ocean, soothes my mind like a preliminary practice to whatever might come after. If the answer to *Who is Singing?* is that I am indeed a musician – then I will continue the journey being open and curious like a child, resting like a *dakini*, and enjoying Rinpoche's mantra: *First Feel Free*.

For a taste of Silvia's music:

Liminal, the whole CD-Album (2015)
<http://liminalthemusic.com>

Composition: Morena and later reprinted as *Devotion*, 2000

<https://open.spotify.com/album/6oig4RHKgkzeKFnoIdJyG9?highlight=spotify-track:iUAUuTmmGBihBCMtEVyVxr>

From: Invocation, CD (2003)

About the Artist

Silvia Nakkach, M.A., MMT, is Grammy's nominated award-winning composer, sound artist, former psychologist, and author. She is recognized internationally as pioneering the field of sound in consciousness and cross-cultural music therapies. She has released many CD-Albums and among other publications, her book *Free Your Voice*, was published by Sound True (2012). She resides in Berkeley, California. ©

How I Met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu

How I Met My Perfect Teacher

Karin Koppensteiner

“A Guru does not only give Teachings. A Guru gives himself.” This famous phrase was the first that came to my mind when I was asked by *The Mirror* to write about how I met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. There are so many aspects of the relationship between a Master and disciple. Eventually the example of the Master will manifest in the disciple. Then, that is what I feel, Teacher and student really meet.

Before I started to write this article, being a professional writer for 35 years, I asked myself, “When did I really meet the Guru?” Short and longer memories of events before meeting the Master started to appear.

Even though Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche was transparent like a jewel he had many quite normal aspects of a Tibetan person in exile. He was a working person, a famous historian, father of a family, a husband, a professor in University, although some of these aspects were not so relevant for me, as his disciple.

When my precious Master died in September 2018, I met his precious human body in a glass casket in a Stupa at Merigar West, completely surrendered to the future. Two months before, at Adzamgar in Kham/Sechuan in the old Gönpa I had seen a figure like this one, also in a class casket, sitting on a throne, wearing sunglasses. “Must be a wax figure”, I had said to my family, while we stood in awe before the throne. Now, at Merigar, just two months later, my precious Master looked quite similar, the skin a little greyish, preserved for future faith and trust.

“In questo Thigle unico non c’è ne separazione ne unificazione.” I heard the words of my precious Teacher when I left the Stupa that held his remains. When I circumambulated the Stupa, this Thigle opened. I walked alone, empowered and with deep trust. Was it then, that I had finally met my Master?

After Rinpoche’s passing, my vision of him started to change, becoming more pure. Slowly, slowly he manifested as one



of the thousands of male and female Buddhists in the huge Buddhafields.

Nearly 40 years before, on a cold winter morning, I was in a cafe in Campo dei Fiori in Rome/Italy, where we had a stage at Teatro di Trastevere. One of my Viennese friends, a Tibetologist, but also a musician in the theatre group I was touring with, told me about his Tibetan Master Norbu, who was living not so far away.

Had I met the Teacher already in his Vajra Song, the first time I heard it, sung by some of Namkhai Norbu’s early disciples in a beautiful garden in Vienna 39 years ago? Was it when, with determination, I said, “I want to learn this song!”

The small Sangha of Vienna adopted me and I learned Yantra Yoga and Chöd in the following year. I wanted to meet this Tibetan Teacher they called “Norbu”. I liked the idea of calling someone by the name “Jewel”, but I did not know what it really meant. I started to read books about Tibet, although there were hardly any about Dzogchen at that time. Meanwhile the Tibetan Teacher I wanted to meet, Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche, was working at the university in Naples/Italy, had an Italian family, spoke hardly any English, and gave Retreats only in his free time on holiday.

In Vienna, my native city, I lived with my little daughter, Elisha, who was in kindergarten. At that time I had stopped working in theater and arts, preparing for a good job in Austrian radio to earn enough money for a comfortable life for the two of us.

I sat in the office of the head of this radio department, in front of the huge print of a strange wrathful looking being, half-ser-

pent, all covered with eyes. Immediately afterwards I decided to leave for Tuscany and finally meet the Teacher.

One day in early June 1982 I headed for Italy in my small car, with my daughter and a friend of a friend, who needed a ride from Vienna to Varese. Exactly four years later I would move to Bagnore close to Merigar, but, of course, I did not know that yet. I stayed for some days in Varese and met a group of Rinpoche’s students, some becoming life-long friends, like Tiziana Gottardi and Fabio Andrico. We did Ganapuja together and there was a lot of wine-drinking.

Finally I arrived in Tuscany and picked up my boyfriend and dharma-friends from Vienna at a train station. Leaving the main road at Paganico we could already see Monte Amiata. Merigar was supposed to be found somewhere on the slopes of this huge mountain – “Just ask in Arcidosso”. Hardly anyone there spoke English at the time and I did not speak Italian, but a friend did. The road the locals had indicated was a small dirt road, so steep at the beginning that it took us a few tries to get up the hill. Everybody had to get out of the car and walk, while I drove the small car uphill. Somehow we found this hidden land of Merigar, full of shrubs and bushes, a few trees in the distance, accessed by a small road leading to a huge old house, partly without roof.

We found a few people, some already camping in the distance below the house, and put up our tents not far away from the others. “Beware of vipers!” some people, who seemed to be a little in charge and spoke English told us. Where was the Tibetan Master everybody called Norbu?

About 60 mostly young people from different countries sat in the dry grass on a hill, not far from where the Merigar Gönpa would be built eight years later. There was a huge piece of white cotton, fixed with ropes as a roof for shade, and it was warm and dry. The next day we sat there waiting for the Tibetan Teacher. He came, wearing a big hat, accompanied by two young Italians. He sat down on a cushion in the grass. We sat around him, also in the grass, on our blankets. When the Master began to teach, in Italian, someone translating into English, tears started rolling down my face. Soon my dress was wet and someone handed me paper towels. When the Teaching was finished the tears also stopped. I felt very light and happy. We stayed in the tents, did Yantra Yoga in the morning in the grass, washed ourselves down in the Zancona River, and brought drinking wa-



When the Merigar Gönpa was built and His Holiness Dalai Lama was invited for the Inauguration of the Gönpa, I was Gekó at Merigar. During the event, one person needed to stay near the telephone in the house (this was 1991 – no cell phones yet!). I volunteered, which also meant I would attend neither the ceremony nor the Dzogchen Teaching the Dalai Lama was supposed to give. Suddenly someone of the Gakyil rushed into the office of the Yellow House and said, “THEY want to have tea in the nomads’ tent!” So I made tea, took our best cups, went quickly down to the tent, while someone else stayed at the telephone for that time. Serving the tea in the tent, I somehow got caught up between some nomad artifacts. I just sat quietly beside the two His Holinesses: the Dalai Lama and my precious Teacher Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche, in his best suit. Photo by Riccardo Dessole, 1990

ter from the fountains in and around Ar-cidosso in big plastic containers. In the evening we did Chöd with Norbu Rinpoche, who would lead us around in the darkness through the bushes. There were many flashlights and a most beautiful night sky reminding me of the universe we were in.

Next day, at the Teaching, the same thing: tears running down without end. It was not unhappiness, it was not happiness. What I felt I could roughly describe as deep relief, as if I had been running towards an abyss and someone had caught me, just before I fell. An unknown kind of deep gratitude and relief started to grow, not only towards the Tibetan Teacher, who also became “Norbu” for me. All the practices he taught us, all the lights he spread, it was real, it was familiar, it was home beyond doubt.

This was the first time I met Namkhai Norbu in person. He was always surrounded by a small group of Italian students, which made it difficult to address him outside the Teaching and I would also need a translator, as Rinpoche spoke Italian and I did not, then. The Teacher remained distant as a person to me until the moment, maybe on the third or fourth day of the Retreat, when my small daughter Elisha, after the Teaching, which she had attended attentively, went to the Teacher, showed him, without words, some route on a map and then took his hand and went away with him. This was another moment of meeting this Teacher, again on a level beyond words.

At this first Retreat at Merigar West many of my worlds, past and present, joined to become one. I felt I was coming home onto safe ground.

I grew up in socialist-communist surroundings in a working class family. I had been engaged in politics from an early age, especially during my studies at the film-school in Berlin where I came in touch with Maoism. In Vienna we created an alternative kindergarten and school with a group of parents, with a lot of effort of time and money. Later the school would become an example for the city of Vienna changing its basic schooling system. I was a poet and journalist, had my own house with a garden in Vienna.

It was not possible for me to get into the traditional Tibetan setting of a monastic Teacher. I had tried once in the Buddhist center in Vienna, but ran away before the event started, scared off by the many red robes and strange behavior, like having to throw oneself on the ground before a red-robed person. But there, on the land of Merigar, I found a home without words. Immediately I felt an immense respect for this Norbu, a layperson without a Tibetan attitude, who introduced me in such a light way, as if it was the easiest thing in the world, into the deep knowledge of Dzogchen.

Just briefly I would like to write about another way I met my perfect Teacher. That was when he appeared at Merigar as a student of an eminent Lama, like His Ho-

liness the Dalai Lama or of the Dzogchen Master Lopön Tenzin Namdak. Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche would get out of his everyday clothes and into a western suit. He would sit with us in front of the Teacher, very humble and so elegant. This way he also taught me how to receive and honor the Buddhist Teachings. It was around the time when the Gönpa at Merigar was built, 1990, that we started to call our precious Master “Rinpoche” or “Norbu Rinpoche”.

Coming back to the image of the Stupa with the precious remains of our Teacher inside, that I wrote about at the beginning: every day I think about the complete surrender of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu as a Buddha, and it mirrors my own possibilities and teaches me to stretch a little further every day. Have I surrendered to the world of beings, victorious as a Buddha’s daughter and soft as softest cashmere wool? Have I offered my continuous service to all sentient beings, like the example my Teacher showed me? This is what I ask myself every day, and some days, I really meet my perfect Teacher. Wonderful! ©

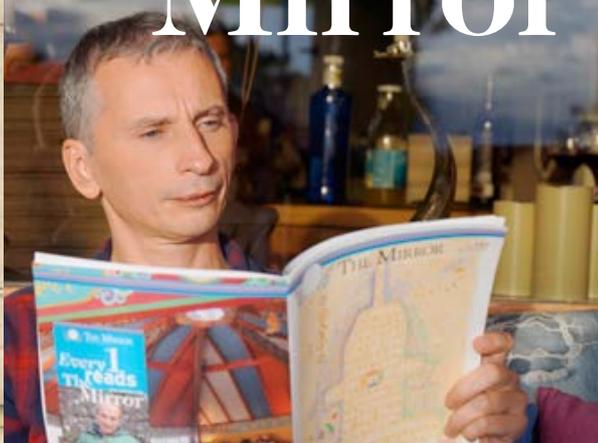
Karin Koppensteiner was born in Vienna/Austria 1955. She was trained as a filmmaker and journalist. She met Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in 1982. After 1986 she has continuously worked in the International Dzogchen Community. Karin is married, has lived in Switzerland since 1996 and works as an artist, writer and translator. In November her latest novel *Bonsai*, in German language, was published.



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